



Akashic Records

of the Bastard Magic Instructor

3

羊太郎

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ILLUSTRATION 三嶋くろね
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TRANSLATION yuNS

Akashic records
of bastard magic instructor


ロクでなし魔術講師と

禁忌教典

アカシックレコード

3





**"Damn sensei...
How about we take
a step outside--!?
(cry)"**

**"You better watch your
back when you're out
at night--!" (sob)**

...The situation was already beyond control.

Glen Ryders
Although the
unifying force of his
class, his usual
demeanor is
undeserving of any
respect.
A truly regrettable
magic instructor.

"Kyaaaaaa~~~~!"

Wendy Nabless
A haughty and slightly high-handed
noble lady. Unexpectedly, she
seems to have an strong infatuation
with gossip related to the class.

**How bold~!
How passionate~!**

Sistina Phebell
Lumia's condition has been
weighing heavily on her mind
since the end of the Magic
Games Festival. That said, her
troubles have recently
reached unprecented levels
with Riel's inclusion.

**"Glen is my
everything.
I've decided
that I will
live for his
sake."**

Riel Rayford
Glen's former comrade-in-arms.
Although she was formally admitted to
the academy as Lumia's bodyguard,
her lack of common sense might just
be the cause of trouble instead--

Riel


An anime-style illustration of two young women in swimsuits. The woman on the left has long, flowing white hair with a blue headband, green eyes, and a surprised expression. She is wearing a purple one-piece swimsuit with a pink rose pattern and a white lace collar. She is reaching out with her right hand towards the other woman. The woman on the right has short blonde hair with a green bow, blue eyes, and a happy expression. She is wearing a blue and white striped one-piece swimsuit. The background is a bright blue sky with white clouds and several small white birds flying in the distance.

“The water feels great!
Come here, Sisti, Riel!”

“Come on!
Let’s go for a
swim, Riel!”

Lumia Tinsel

A kind and well-mannered girl.
While few truly understand her,
her outstanding figure makes
her popular even amongst
more ‘wicked’ men.



The face. The gestures. The expressions.
I've seen it before, but from where...?
The answer revealed itself like bubbles
rising from water.

“...Brother? Is that you...
brother?”

“...Save me, Riel.”

“Riel!
Get away from him!”

Rizerf Olbria

A man who appears to be from an affluent family. He's made a name for himself as a somewhat-stylish pick-up artist, but why does he seem to have some ties with Glen-!?

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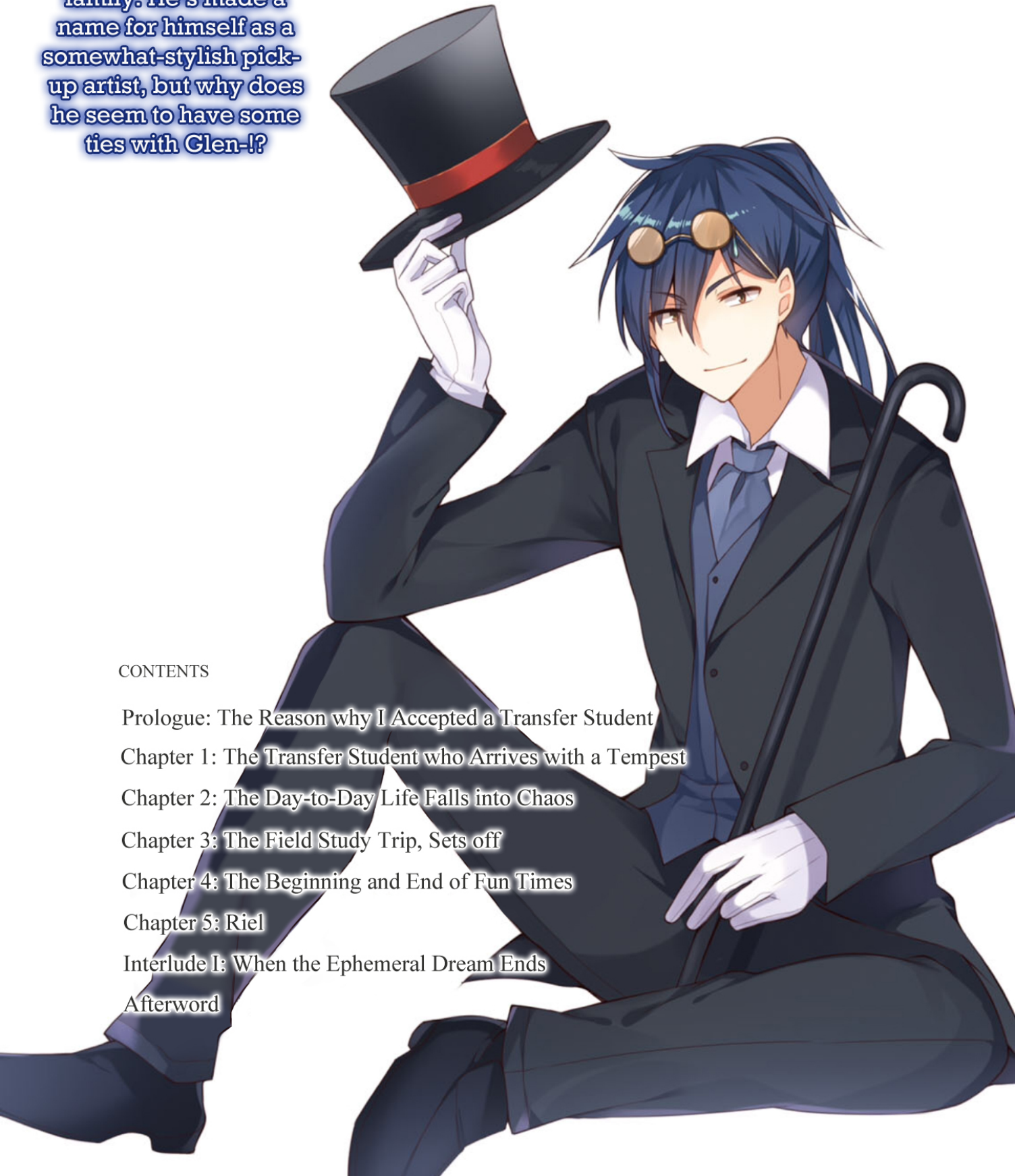
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The record is wise and all-knowing. It creates and grasps everything.

For that reason, it will most likely

Guide humanity towards the path of destruction——.

“The Sky Fortress of Melgarius” by Rolan·Eltoria

Akashic Records of the Bastard Magic Instructor



Prologue: The Reason I Accepted a Transfer Student

“I’m so sorry! Please forgive me! Headmaster Rick! Serika-sama!”

The headmaster’s room at Alzano Imperial Magic Academy.

Glen, who had been called to the headmaster’s room, suddenly performed an impressive somersault, landing elegantly, prostrated on the floor.

There was naught for Serika and Headmaster Rick to do but take in the sight.

“Oi Glen, what the heck are you doing?”

“It was just a slip of the hand... Just an honest mistake, I swear-! Of course, it would only be natural for esteemed figures such as yourselves to be angry! This young one hereby expresses his humble and earnest apologies~!”

Serika and Rick exchange a short glance as Glen solemnly continued.

“I mixed up the types of fertilizers, so the Kharlet plants in the medicinal garden have all withered. I am very, very sorry —!”

Rick calmly replied to the terrified Glen.

“Hahaha, Glen-kun, raise your head. It certainly troubles me that you mistake this meeting as a punishment hearing. Anyway, I did not summon you here for that. There’s something we need of you.”

“Ah, what the heck? So it’s like that? A-Aha-ha-ha! Geez, don’t scare me man!”

Glen relaxedly rose to his feet.

“I knew it! I totally destroyed all the evidence of it, so how could anyone have possibly found out! A-ha-ha-ha!”

Glen laughed cheerfully.

“Fufufu, you are too careless, Glen-kun.” The headmaster said with a cheerful laugh.

“A-ha-ha-“

“Fufufu”

The two laughed in unison...

“That being said Glen-kun, a wage deduction is due.”

“Gyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—!? I knew ittttt—!”

The headmaster lay down his judgment with a cheerful laugh as Glen clasped his head with his hand and cried out in agony.

“Ugh, damnit all... If my wages get cut any further, I’ll practically be paying the school...”

Faced with a just yet uncompassionate reality, tears fell from Glen’s eyes.

“Ah... Thank god I won that bet with Ha... something-senpai during the Magic Games Festival... Wait a second, didn’t I get all pretentious and stuff and treat the students to that meal...! Why!? Why am I so stupid!?”

“Shameless as you are, do you not think what you’re doing is a bit too disgraceful...? Do you not feel any regret?”

Serika turned her eyes in disbelief towards Glen, who had crawled and curled into a ball in a dark corner of the room.

“To start with, if you’re going to complain about your wages being cut, why don’t you change your work attitude a little? You’re fairly serious when it comes to your lectures, but other than that you’re much too carefree. Would it kill you to have a bit of self-awareness as a magician...”

“Tch... Shush shush. Yeah yeah yeah yeah, I didn’t hear any—

thing.”

“Well, whatever you’re guilty of, just remember to keep yourself clean and stay quiet... like I do. Though, you have always been rather sloppy when it came to ‘wrapping things up’.”

“Thank you for your sage advice! As expected of my great master! Truly deserving of my eternal respect!”

Glen brought Serika’s hands into his own, and looked towards her with admiration and respect—

“Oh, why did I ever hire these people...”

Bearing witness to the grandeur occasion of the bonding between master and student, Rick cast a distant gaze through the window of his office.

There, was the usual sight of the academy grounds that were brimming with nature, enclosed by a metal fence which isolated the academy from the wide expanse of Fejiti. Distant and above was the grandiose mirage castle — Melgarius’ Sky Castle.

“Back on topic, Glen-kun, the matter I wanted to discuss with you is regarding a transfer student.”

“...A transfer student?”

“Mhm. As of tomorrow, the academy will admit a new student who will be enrolled in Glen-kun’s class.”

“Tomorrow? This seems a bit urgent doesn’t it...? Not to mention that admitting someone in the middle of the term is a bit strange in and of itself.”

“...Regardless, you have no say in the matter.”

The headmaster pushed the object in his hands across the table.

It was scroll-envelope, the cover to which had already been opened. Upon closer inspection, the envelope did not have any address printed on it. Furthermore, the casing for the

envelope was made of high-quality leather. On second thought, it was likely that the envelope had not been sent through any government agency, but rather, had been delivered directly to the academy via a liaison.

Also this traces of the seal... Isn't this the seal used by the imperial army?

Glen opened the cover to the envelope, retrieved the fine goatskin paper, and unrolled it. The contents of the letter had been written in compact, small, and precise script. At the end of the letter was a gold-engraved emblem of a hawk.

“A hawk? That means... that this is a document that’s been authorized by the Empress herself... and the contents are treated as highly confidential.... Hey wait a second! Isn’t this a top-secret document regarding the transfer of military personnel!?”

Glen eyes widened in awe as he stared at the goatskin letter.

“Mhm. In more common terms, this is a document decreeing that you must accept whatever transfer student is coming tomorrow into your class; an imperial missive chartered by Her Majesty the Empress.”

“...-, could it be that...”

The unusual time, the sudden transfer student, and the specification that it must be in his class...

“Headmaster, this transfer student is...”

“Yes, it’s as you suspect. This transfer student is a member of the Imperial Court Magicians sent here to act as Lumia-kun’s bodyguard. If she is in the same class as Lumia, it would be easier for her to perform her duties — That was the judgment agreed upon by the government and the army.

“...-!”

Lumia Tinsel.

A female student in Glen’s class. Although her grades in theory classes were excellent, she wasn’t good at putting

magic outside the realm of white magic into practice. Thus, her overall grades were about average. Aside from her excellent looks, she was a normal young girl and student who was nothing to write home about.

However, she was the central figure of a complex web of secrets.

First of all, she bore the lineage of the Alzano Empire's royal family and was a full-fledged princess.

Secondly, while being a princess, she was also a 'supernatural', who were widely believe to be demonspawn by the general populace. As a result of various political circumstances, she was stripped of her place as second-in-line for the throne, and was exiled from the royal family.

Thirdly, for reasons unbeknownst, the 'Wisdom of the Heaven's Research Society' – a terrorist organization which cast a dark shadow across history in various bloody struggles against the government – were after her.

Lumia's so-called 'supernatural ability' was called 'Emotion Amplifier', which bolstered one's magical abilities and powers through physical contact.

While certainly a rare and perhaps rule-breaking ability, it shouldn't be enough to cause such great movements from an infamous organization such as the 'Wisdom of the Heaven's Research Society', nor was it powerful enough for them to desire it. If all they wanted was simply the enhancement of magical abilities and powers, then there were various methods and techniques that were easily accessible to them using today's methods.

The only reason I can think of would be that they want to use Lumia's standing as a former princess to drive some political movement, but twice now they've said that her life wasn't of particular importance. So it's unlikely that they want her for political reasons.

So just what is so special about Lumia? Why do the Wisdom of the Heaven's

Research Society want her? I just don't get it.

Well, even if we don't know what they're planning, the government have more or less decided it wouldn't be good to let Lumia be taken by them. If Lumia is taken by them, it wouldn't be hard to imagine that something bad will happen.

That being said though, if they gave special treatment to a former princess like Lumia, she will definitely become the center of people's attention, and that would be an unnecessary risk to the peace of the Empire as a whole. If word goes out that the holiest of holy royal family has a 'supernatural' in their ranks, the foundations of this nation would be crumble in an instant. In a certain sense of words, she's a bomb to this nation's security.

So their last resort is to send an elite from the Imperial Court Magicians to this academy to guard Lumia in secret... At least, that's probably the gist of it.

"Well... That's pretty reassuring."

That was what Glen honestly believed.

Glen was once a member of that group, so he had a very clear understanding of what it meant for one to be sent here. The Imperial Court Magicians were the undisputedly the strongest group of magicians of the Empire, the elites amongst elites. It would be fitting to say that each member could fight an army on their own. Their strength was so great, that even Glen himself wondered why a third-rate magician had been allowed to join their ranks. A gathering of monsters in a different dimension of its own.

Ever since Lumia had become the clear target of the Wisdom of the Heaven's Research Society, Glen couldn't help but be worried about her safety every day. However, now that there was to be an Imperial Court Magician by her side at all times, he couldn't help but feel that a great burden had been taken from his shoulders.

"Glen-kun's class is soon scheduled to go on a mandatory outing as part of the academy's curriculum, that being, the 'Field Study'. Would it not be very reassuring to have this

transfer student there for that?”

What Rick said was correct, so Glen had no reason to object.

“I got it. I will happily accept this transfer student.”

“Oh? Is that so? Very well then.”

Hearing Glen’s reply, Rick satisfiedly nodded.

“Right right, this document contains the details of the transfer student. Please read through it for reference.”

“Gotcha’. Eh wait...?”

Glen picked up the document and glanced over it.

Sent from the Imperial Court Magicians... Regardless, this is considered a special mission, so the person sent here is probably from the special operations sect.

The role that the Imperial Court Magicians played in the army was that of a symbol of magical might. Amongst them, there was a special group that specialized in dealing with cases and incidents related to magic – the ‘special operations sect’.

With that in mind, someone whose magic is suited to bodyguard missions and wouldn’t feel out of place as a transfer student would be... Christoph of ‘The Hierophant’? If that guy comes, I’ll feel a bit...

With due certainty as to the identity of the transfer student, Glen read through the document—

Riel Rayford.

He thought he had seen this name... in the name column of the document regarding the transfer student...

“...My my.”

Glen exaggeratedly turned his head away from the document and rubbed his eyes.

“Haha... I guess I’ve been a bit burnt out recently... For a moment there I thought that I saw a name that shouldn’t be there...”

Glen took another look.

Riel Rayford.

He hadn't been wrong in the slightest. The name was printed in fine script in the corresponding column.

"Oh shit... I think I'm starting to see things. I might have some serious visual impairment... or maybe I'm going crazy?"

Glen took another look.

Riel Rayford.

"...Oi oi, Glen, calm down, keep yourself together. Riel? That Riel of 'The Chariot'? ...No way in hell right? That brute of a musclebrained boar-of-a-girl? That natural-born god of destruction? That ever-dejected angel of reaping? The girl whose eternally number one in the 'people I don't want to be on a mission with' ranking? The foremost authority in 'coordinated efforts are useless'? The same Riel to which several branches of the army have said that 'strategy is pointless when Riel's here'? That Riel?"

Glen rubbed his shoulders as sweat drenched his visage.

"HAHA- NAI-SU JYO-KU. Isn't bodyguard-ing a pretty delicate mission? And they would leave a special mission that requires a good ability to assess the situation to Riel? Pfft, nice one! A-ha-ha! The special operations sect aren't that stupid, and it's not like they're lacking the personnel..."

Glen cast another fleeting glance at the document. With half-opened eyes filled with unadulterated fear, he carefully read the name letter-by-letter.

Riel Rayford.

No matter how he looked, no matter how he read it, he could only see the words 'Riel Rayford'.

Suspecting that this was an anagram of some sort, Glen broke down the spelling and restructured it, but no matter how hard he tried it didn't seem to work. Then perhaps the

paper might respond to heat? Glen tried to toast the paper in the fire of an oil-light, but the surface of the paper didn't seem to change.

"..."

Glen fell silent for several seconds as his gaze once again fell on the name inscribed on the goatskin paper...

Faced with an unchanging, uncompassionate, and mercilessly cruel reality—

"Hey wait a seconooooonnnnddddddddddd—!?"

Glen's cry echoed through the headmaster's room...

Chapter 1: The Transfer Student Arrives with a Tempest

...I have a white memory.

A retina-burning white — Even now, I remember that moment clearly.

Like a fish living in an arctic lake, slowly being encased in a coffin of ice.

On that day, in that moment — My heart, my body, were slowly dying.

“Hah—Hah—Hah...”

I remember that there were a sparse number of conifer trees were spread across the area in a disorderly fashion; that I was in a forest somewhere.

What first came to mind was the cold. A piercing frost that froze my breath. A freezing chill that numbed my skin; that could be felt down to my bones. A world below the freezing point that denied the existence of life.

What I remember most vividly was the whiteness. It was a fastidious shade of pure white. Whether it was tree branches, undergrowth, or the floor, all was covered in dizzying white snow; a cruel and beautiful silvery-white world.

The snowflakes that fell as if dancing bestowed small, faint, white noises in my field of vision, dying my world with whiteness, with coldness.

“...Hah...a...Hah—”

Stepping on the soft snow that buried my knees, I continued to wander aimlessly.

Step... after step. . Slowly...slowly.

I dredged my dull body along, without the strength to even shake off the snow on my head and shoulders.

I pushed through the flawless snow, dying it scarlet in my wake.

Blood trickled from my body without end.

In the perfectly white world dyed with a streak of scarlet. My life fell into nothingness like a hourglass.

“Geh.. Hah—Hah—a...aa...”

An ear-piercing silence rang through the air. There was only the sound of trodden snow and the echo of fiery breath. However, that was soon buried in the tranquility of the deep snowscape as the heat dispersed without a trace.

I could not feel my arms and legs. Even the pain of my deep wounds could barely be felt.

But I could feel the fire within me being burnt out.

—It’s about time.

For what reason did I continue to push on to the very end like this?

For what reason did I continue pushing through the snow, despite knowing that my life would soon reach its end?

“Guh-... Even though... I... already... have... nothing...”

Yes, I have nothing. No reason to live. No goal to live for. No right to live.

I am a ‘cleaner’ of a certain magic organization... That is to say, a killer. The organization took my brother as a hostage. In exchange for a guarantee that he would live, I followed the organizations bidding as a ‘cleaner’ and continued to kill those who opposed them.

I had no other relatives. My kind brother was all that was left, he meant everything to me.

For his sake — I will dye my hands red as many times as I

need to. I—

.....

...But, my brother – my everything – died. He was killed by □□□□.

My brother was gone.

Then shouldn't I, who continued to kill for the sake of my brother, disappear?

Shouldn't I, who continued to soil my hands with blood over and over again for the sake of my brother, have no right to continue living on?

Yet, I didn't stop. Even though I knew there was nothing but death ahead of me, even though I knew that it was all pointless in the end, I continued to walk forward, hoping for some miracle.

Ah, how deceitful. How hypocritical.

I had said that it was for my brother... but in the end, it was only for myself. I merely used my brother as a shield to defend myself from my sins.

How could god possibly bestow a miracle on such a hypocrite?

“u...!? ...a-“

When I came to, I found myself fallen on the cold snow. Strength had left my body.

I tried to rise to my feet, but my hands brushed the snow in futility. My body would no longer listen to me.

...I reached my limit.

In the beginning, I was fatally wounded by □□□□. After that, I made my escape, fighting pursuers from the organization many times over until I made it here. My body was marked with countless wounds. It was a miracle that I had made it this far.

Thus, after falling on the snow, my body dramatically approached its end.

Heat—continued to trickle from my body.

My life plummeted towards zero as the bloodstains continued to blossom on the field of snow.

“a... A... I... am...”

Turning my body over with great difficulty, I raised my left hand... towards the sky.

As if the capture it in my palm. Without a thought... Without a meaning...

On the wrist of my trembling left arm was a bracelet. My brother had given it to me somewhere. It matched with his own.

[Hey □□□□. Someday, let's run away from this organization... and wind up in some peaceful place to live with just the two of us.]

With a flash, the nostalgic memory of my brother rose to the surface. Now, it's but a shallow, distant, fleeting dream.

“...Save... me... br... other... I...”

As my overflowing tears blurred my vision— it happened.

“Who's there!?”

“...Eh?”

Suddenly, the sounds of someone dashing through snow drew near.

Soon after, a man appeared from behind the trees.

“...-! You are...!?”

The man looked down in shock upon finding me. He was tall and lean with black hair, black eyes, and wore a black coat. He seemed to be a few years older than me. He aimed a percussion-style revolver at me.

But my eyes were not fixated on the weapon, but rather, his appearance.

His face... his figure... were like that of someone.

“... Br... other...?”

No. They looked very alike, but he isn't my brother. My brother was already dead.

“...Sorry, you must have been through a lot to get here.”

After confirming my appearance, the man who looked like my brother lowered his gun and apologized.

“If only I could have made it here sooner...”

After a brief moment of silence, the man asked me a question?

“Hey you... what's your name?”

“My... My name is—

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□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ and you've picked up
something troublesome again, haven't you Glen? That girl
has been □□ by the Wisdom of the Heaven's Research
Society's '□ □□□' to □□□□ right? ...You've done
something unwise if I say so myself.”

My consciousness suddenly became clear.

“I-, I mean it can't be helped now can it...? I was asked by

that guy...”

“And do you have any reason to oblige his request?”

“You’re not wrong... but... that guy...-!”

“Hmpf. There you go pretending to be a ‘Magician of Justice’ again. You really are beyond help.”

When I opened my eyes, the snowy scenery was gone. It was no longer cold. It was warm.

Sleeping on the white bed, I was alive.

By my bedside was two men. One was the person I had met in the snowy world. I did not know the other person.

“Oh, the sleeping beauty finally woke up. Oi Albert, could you put off the lecturing till later?”

“Tch... Do what you want. This time will certainly mark the last time I act so civil with you.”

“Haha-, you say that, but this is already the tenth time. Oh, Al-chan, what a tsundere you... I’m so sorry. Could you please lower the finger you have pointed to my chest? And could you please not look like me like I’m trash? It’s honestly terrifying.”

“...Hmpf.”

The stranger sullenly exhaled and left the room.

The moment the stranger left, the person I met in the snowy world lost his liveliness.

“...Damn it.”

With a sufferable sigh, his expression twisted into agony.

“...To save each and every person... The ‘Magician of Justice’ in the picture book... I know... I know that it’s all a lie... but I...”

“.....”

Finally, he noticed me staring at him.

He released a sigh while awkwardly scratching his head, and turned his eyes down towards me.

“Yo, we meet again. Well actually... this should be first time we’ve met isn’t it?”

“You are... the person that saved me... from that snowy world...?”

I wonder why? For a moment, the person’s expression seemed to be overcome with sorrow. It was as if he was trying to hide his guilty conscience... As I thought, he does look somewhat like my brother.

“Ah...”

Suddenly, I noticed. There was something odd about my left hand.

I pulled my left hand out from the blankets, and gazed at my wrist.

“Something wrong?”

“It’s gone... My... bracelet...”

“Sorry. That’s... uhm...”

For some reason, the person seemed hesitant to continue.

“...Mm, it’s been confiscated. It’ll kept by the Imperial Court Magicians for safekeeping.”

“...You can’t... give it back?”

“No can do, and I can’t explain why either... Sorry, but I recommend you give up on it.”

Hearing that, I felt a sense of loss that was akin to a part of my body being cut off. That bracelet was a gift from my brother. No matter how harsh the times are, no matter the hardships I had to face, it made me... feel as if my brother were here with me.

“...I’m sorry.”

That person apologized to me once again.

Once back when we first met, and once again now.

Why is this person apologizing to me without a word?

I only stared at him.

“Call me Glen.”

He suddenly introduced himself. Of course, his name was different from my brother’s.

“What’s your name? Could you tell me again?”

Name. My name.

I feel like I’ve already told this person my name before.

But why is it that I feel like I need to tell him again...?

Following this feeling, I told the person named Glen my name.

“Riel... My name is Riel.”

“That... so. Riel, huh?”

Puh

That person – Glen – placed a hand on my head with a wide smile and said.

“...Nice to meet you, Riel.”

This was how the person who looks like my brother... Glen and I met—

.....

...

...Sway and sway... Sway and sway and sway.

I feel something shaking.

“Little Miss... Hey Little Miss, we’ve arrived~”

I feel like someone is calling for me from faraway.

“.....ng”

My fuddled mind which had been wandering the days of the past returned to the present time.

“I understand that you’re tired, but could you please wake up Little Miss?”

I slowly opened my eyes.

I was currently in a stagecoach; a small horse-drawn carriage.

I was lying down on one of the two leather benches that faced one another, wrapped in a blanket. It seems like I was sleeping until now.

“...?”

I slowly propped myself up from the bench. Although I felt a bit tired, it wasn’t a bad feeling.

“So you’re finally awake. Good morning, Little Miss.”

After getting up, I saw the coachman looking in from the other side end of the open door.

“My, it must’ve been rough for you to travel all the way from the imperial capital Orlando to the academia town of Fejiti, missus.”

During the journey, the coachman had also played the role of a travel companion. He offered his hand with a smile.

I silently grabbed his hand and he gently helped me off the stagecoach.

Outside, a faint morning fog permeated the air.

The surroundings were still dim.

While this was a given for the porter station which lay outside the town, I could tell from faraway that the town of Fejiti, which was lined with rows after rows of pointed roofs, was still asleep.

“Missus, that uniform... is the uniform of Alzano Imperial Magic Academy right? I see, so you’ll be studying there after this?”

The coachman conversed with me in a relaxed manner as he carried the luggage in the stagecoach to me.

I nodded my head.

Then, I received.

“A-h-ha, work hard on your studies alright, Little Miss?”

Leaving behind words of encouragement, the coachman returned to the driver’s seat of the stagecoach.

“Now then, thank you once again for choosing our company’s stagecoach services. We look forward to seeing you again... And don’t forget to eat well ok? ...Have a good day.”

The coachman recited the business phrase in a joking manner as part of his farewells and slightly tipped his hat. Then, he used the reins of the horse to steer the stagecoach towards the parking area located near the station.

I stood there for a while, idly seeing him off, before turning my gaze towards Fejiti.

Although I’ve been here recently, I can’t help but feel that this is a nostalgic homecoming of sorts.

It’s probably because Glen is here.

“...”

I closed my eyes.

I thought back to the recent Magic Games Festival, where I reunited with Glen after a year.

I understand that this made me feel just a little excited.

As for the mission I’ve been tasked with... I don’t really get the details, but all in all it means that I’ll be close to Glen.

I think that’s a very good thing.

Ever since Glen suddenly left me a year ago, I’ve been somewhat uneasy. I don’t understand why, but I often feel a discomfort in my chest.

But ever since I met Glen by coincidence not long ago, that ever-present unease and discomfort were blown away all at once.

I can be with Glen again...

I understand that just thinking this puts my heart and mind at ease.

I don't understand why, but I know that my chest fills up with a pleasant feeling.

"...mm"

I want to see him sooner.

I opened my eyes and began to walk towards Fejiti's urban area.

For some reason, I'd forgotten to bring a map of Fejiti's districts. The parts of the town that I memorized during my recent visit had also been forgotten.

...Well, I can probably do this somehow... by instinct.

.....

...

As of recently, a student of Alzano Imperial Magic Academy, Sistina Phebell, has been carrying a secret.

For Sistina, it was a secret that couldn't be shared to anyone... or rather, one she didn't want shared.

And so, the time had come to temporarily put this secret into action.

"...M...hm."

The town was still a dimly lit landscape. The time was prior to daybreak.

Sistina, who lay on the bed in her room, suddenly opened her eyes.

Sistina was no stranger to mornings. She was the sort of person that would remind herself to wake up early before sleeping. She would then carry wake up organically through force of will when the time came. This special skill of hers played a big role in keeping her secret.

Now awake, Sistina, hair still slightly messy, glanced around her room. Although the room was teeming with refinement, there were as many furnishings as one would expect. The most conspicuous piece of Sistina's room was undoubtedly the large wooden bookshelves that was filled with books on magic and archaeology. The other furnishings in the room consisted of a chair, table, lamp – all objects of practical use. For a young girl's room, it was considerably tasteless. It was not like Lumia's room across the corridor, which seemed much more like a girl's.

The place where Sistina, the daughter of two prominent officials in the ministry of magic, lived, the Phebell residence, had half a century of history behind it. It had been built with both traditional flair and strict architecture, and was unmistakably the mansion of a splendid noble family.

As prominent officials within the Ministry of Magic, Sistina's parents would often be away at the empire's capital for business trips. As a result, she and Lumia were practically the only ones who lived in the residence. The maintenance, management, security, and other miscellaneous tasks were often left to helper-fairies living at the mansion and which had been summoned at a prior time.

“...Alright.”

Sistina silently crawled out of the bed, walked to the closet, and hastily dressed herself. She slipped out of the sleeping gown and into an outfit that was easier to move in, before covering herself with a coat to keep warm. Finally, she put her favorite glove on her left hand.

Completing her preparations, Sistina opened the door and left

her room.

The room across hers was Lumia's room. Lumia was likely none the wiser to what was happening as she drifted along dreamland. Unlike Sistina, she was exceptionally weak to mornings and under normal circumstances she would fail to wake up.

"...Sorry."

As usual, Sistina quietly apologized through the door, and left the mansion.

Although it was still dim outside, Sistina discreetly left the Phebell residence and headed towards the appointed meeting place.

The meeting place was one of the many nature parks that were scattered about Fejiti. The nature park, which belonged to the northern student district, was a popular location for leisurely walks, recreation, and relaxation.

However, given that it was still the early morning, the park was currently empty. As if to break this deathly silence, Sistina noisily paced across the carpet of leaves which crackled and crumpled under her feet. She weaved her way through the forestry to finally arrive at her destination.

The secret meeting place was a brief expanse beneath a large Siebold's beech tree.

The person she was meeting was already waiting there.

"...You're a bit late today hm? That's not like you."

"Um... Erm, sorry... when I was going to sleep last night... I was thinking about our meeting today... so uhm, I was a bit nervous and I couldn't fall asleep..."

Sistina's face grew a little flushed as she awkwardly turned her gaze away.

"...Haha, so you were looking forward to this? Quite the

masochist aren't you?"

"N-, No I'm not! I-, It's not like that you idiot...!"

Glen showed a wicked smile. Although Sistina had hurriedly denied what he said, there was no power in her voice or her words.

"On another note though, you're no goody-two-shoes either aren't you, White Cat? You're not engaged to anybody and yet you're meeting me every day behind their back... If your parents hear about this, who knows how long they'll be crying about this?"

"E-, Even if you say that... there's no other way... After all... I... uhm..."

"Well whatever. Unfortunately, there's no one here today, so we can do what we want to without having to worry about others. Let's get started then, shall we?"



As if losing his patience, Glen approached Sistina.

“...W-, Wait... My... heart isn’t ready for this yet...!”

Sistina slowly retreated away from Glen

However, she didn’t intend to run away, her steps back were slow and hesitant.

“Sorry, I’m more of the hasty type.”

Glen continued to advance.

...Closer and closer.

“A...Ah...”

Finally, Sistina stopped moving away, prepared for what was to come.

She clutched her trembling arms and murmured whilst facing downwards.

“Uhm... Please be gentle... so that it won’t hurt...”

“Well, I can’t guarantee that.”

Glen revealed a broad, seemingly sadistic grin.

“You’re the type that’s fun to tease, after all.”

“Uuu... you brute...”

Then—

In a world with no one but them, in a world that they would tell to no one else—

The two began their secret activities together.

.....

...

How long had it been since then?

“Hah—... Hah—... Hah—”

The sun had finally broken past the horizon, and the morning sky had begun to light up.

Sistina lay exhausted and limp on the carpet of leaves.

Her clothes were unkempt, her face was flushed bright red, her body rolled with beads of sweat. Her gaze grew hollow and vacant as her mind and body could no longer focus on what was in front of her. Her gushing hot gasps of air would not afford her slender throat even a moments rest.

"I'm sorry sensei... Please forgive me... I-, I... can't go on... My hips are..."

Hearing Sistina's incoherent mutters, Glen straightened his loosened necktie and bemusedly looked down.

"What? You're done already...? Well, I guess you are a sheltered lady so you wouldn't have had any chances to do this before. It'll probably be like this until you get used to it."

"...What, what do you mean by used to...? You can get used to this?"

Her head felt numb and her mind was in a daze. Her vision was foggy and she couldn't form any concrete thoughts. The core of her body throbbed with pain and her hips, which had taken the brunt of the load, seemed to crumble even when she lay down. The fatigue accumulated in her limbs from vigorous bodily activity made it feel like her body was drifting into nothingness.

This... I don't think I can get fully used to this no matter how many times I repeat it.

"Sure you'll get used to it. To be honest, you did pretty well today considering it's your first time. You'll improve in the future."

"Improve in the future...? But you were doing as you pleased with me the entire time..."

"Stupid, it's a hundred years too early for you to even try

leading me around the nose.”

“...Well, you sure are experienced.”

Seemingly displeased and unsatisfied, Glen said to Sistina, who stared at him.

“Here, you’ll get cold. Be careful alright? Regardless of what’s happened, you’re still a girl.”

“...Ah.”

Glen wrapped his coat around Sistina’s shoulders.

Sistina caught off guard by Glen’s sudden act of kindness. Perhaps she was being led around the nose... or so, she strongly felt.

...u...It smells like him...

Sistina, who wore Glen’s coat on her shoulders, carried uncharacteristic feelings of embarrassment as she regulated her breathing to normal.

The moments after fatigue were far more pleasant. The cool morning air seemed fresh like never before.

It made one want to indulge themselves in this swelling aftertaste forever.

But—

“Hey sensei... I’ve been wonder, about this, but...”

Sistina stood up from the floor and inquired about a question she could not figure out no matter how much she racked her brain.

“You said you were going to teach me about magic battles... but why is it that we’re practicing boxing...?”

“Well, I thought it was about time for you to ask that.”

Yes, they were doing a special morning practice on magic battles.

This has been the secret between the two as of recently.

Sistina was one of the few that knew about Lumia circumstances. Although she excelled at magic, she was still far too inexperienced in a variety of ways if she wanted to fight to protect someone.

Knowing that, she had asked Glen to teach her the basics of magic battles, so that she would be able to protect Lumia if it ever came down to it.

At first, Glen had been reluctant to instruct Sistina on magic battles. However, as time went on, Sistina's unending enthusiasm chipped away Glen's reluctance and the two began their morning one-on-one practices.

Despite that... since that day, all their morning practices have solely been on sparring with their fists.

After briefly touching on the basic techniques and styles of boxing, the two wore leather gloves used for boxing so that they wouldn't hurt one another. Under the rule that Glen would stop right before hitting Sistina and just tap her lightly, and that Sistina could strike with the intent to actually hit him, they continued their endlessly spar each and every day.

Thus far, Sistina had failed to touch even a single hair on Glen with her fist, while Glen had relentlessly tapped her countless times already.

Usually, when Glen was acting like an idiot, Sistina would have no trouble sending him flying with her fist, but when Glen 'felt like it' and put up the proper stance, she found herself miraculously unable to land a single blow. In the face of Glen's nimble footwork, she could only repeatedly fling her fists at the air in front of her.

Each and every day, Sistina would exhaust herself from her own movements alone, and fall to the floor unable to rise. Perhaps she may have been unaccustomed to the movements of martial arts, but as of recent, the muscular strain on her shoulders and hips was enough to hurt intensely.

Of course, Sistina had been prepared to start from the fundamentals. However, she thought that she would practice to increase her magic power capacity, learn new skills, or learn to shorten her chants. She had thought that it would be at least something along those lines.

However, when the practice actually began, this was the result. She really couldn't understand the reasoning behind it.

"It's cause the logic behind boxing and magic battles are the same." Glen said before Sistina could voice her dissatisfaction.

"You get the various patterns that you can use to hit an opponent with your fist right? Move faster than your opponent, take advantage of their mistakes, and feint to make them expose their weakness. The key is to aim for the beginning and end of the opponent's action and find the appropriate counter. Now do you see how it's a lot like magic battles?"

"Hmm... I suppose you're not wrong."

"You can call magic battles a harder and more complex boxing. Regardless of the situation, you can engrain the basics of magic battles in your body by practicing boxing and feel the flow of offense and defense."

Was it really effective? Sistina had never heard of anyone practicing magic through boxing.

"As long as it's an anti-personnel martial arts, it could've been swordsmanship or whatever really... but I'm better at boxing so that's that."

"Ugh-... I can't help but feel like I'm being tricked... I feel like you're just taking advantage of this moment to release your pent-up grudge from my scolding..."

"Of course there's that as well."

"There was!?"

Guroar! Sistina pounced on the question as if threatening Glen.

“Hey hey, don’t be angry alright? It’s true that boxing helps train your ability to make decisions during magic battles. This training method was personally inherited from Serika you know? She made me do this kind of stuff all the time when I was still a kid.”

Glen gazed up towards the sky with a hint of nostalgia.

Glen would normally never show such a calm expression on his face, so it didn’t seem like he was lying.”

“Mm...”

Although Sistina couldn’t fully understand it, but she was already prepared to continue following Glen’s guidance, so she would obediently accept his training methods.

“But hey... are you really fine with this? You’re a lady hailing from a noble household, so should you really be doing such uncivilized training? Although Swordsmanship isn’t really that different from boxing, it’s practically the standard for nobles and gentlemen isn’t it?”

“How many times have I told you that I’m fine with it? I don’t want something like that to happen again... When it came down to it, I wasn’t to help Lumia at all.”

“Mhm, I guess that’s true, but why did it have to be me? I mean, don’t you like totally hate me? Given your personal connections you should have no problem finding a teacher in and out of the academy.”

“Er... About that... Uhm...”

Sistina couldn’t quite find the words to answer. It was true that she wanted to protect Lumia, to become stronger for her sake. It was undeniable that she bore those thoughts. It was also undeniable that she bore those thoughts when she had lowered her head to beg Glen to teach her. However, why did she had she chosen Glen in particular...?

It was true that Glen was a third-rate magician... but he was a first-rate battlemage. If she were to find someone to teach her how to fight, then there would be no better choice, but was that all there was to it?

“Well, whatever, since you went out of your way to beg to me like that, it shows just how much Lumia means to you. Either way, it saves you a lot of talking if you asked someone who knew about Lumia’s situation anyway.”

“O-, Of course! That’s it! It was be too troublesome to explain myself to anyone else!”

Sistina had said this, but she couldn’t help be feel that something was out of place. To start with, she couldn’t help but feel a thorn in her chest whenever Glen said that she hated him.

She was practicing for Lumia’s sake, yet, why was it that she felt guilty whenever Lumia was brought up? There should be nothing to feel guilty about.

What was the reason for this feeling and pain...? She obsessed on this train of thought.

“Well, with boxing training as the core, we’ll keep building your stamina and instincts. Once you get to a certain point, I’ll teach you how to use military-grade magic.”

“M-, Military grade... magic.”

The purpose of military-grade magic was as its name implied; high power spells used in battle for the sole purpose of killing the opponent. Compared to the general-purposes magic being taught at the academy, the power of military-grade magic was on a whole other level. Sistina had once witnessed the power firsthand... and thinking back on it even now, she couldn’t help but tremble at the thought of the fiendish magic.

“Scared? But if you really want to do protect Lumia if it ever ‘comes down to it’... then you’ll definitely need ‘power’.

You're too naïve if you think reality will be so forgiving otherwise. When you came to ask me to teach you how to fight, I only decided to indulge you because I thought that your thoughts and feelings towards Lumia were genuine. If you feel afraid when you hear about military-grade magic... then I believe that you won't allow yourself to be controlled by the other face of magic, and be able to use that 'power' correctly."

"Well, it would be for the best if there never comes a time where you are forced to use that 'power'..."

Glen had his back turned towards Sistina, so she wouldn't know what sort of expression he had.

However, the feelings she held towards that back... was undoubtedly that of respect.

"From here on out as well... I'll be in your care and guidance, sensei."

She straightened her back and bowed towards Glen as if it were the natural thing to do.

After the morning practice, Sistina stealthily returned to the Phebell residence. After stripping her sweat-stained clothes in the washroom, she entered the connecting bathroom and prepared a light bath. After piping in water from the tank, she adjusted the temperature using a coal-fueled heater and washed away her sweat and fatigue.

As the refreshing post-bath feeling began to set in, Sistina put on the uniform she had prepared in advance and walked to the kitchen. When her parents were out, the chores would be split naturally. Sistina would prepare breakfast as Lumia was typically still asleep, while Lumia would prepare dinner as Sistina would often be busy studying magic at night. In accordance to that schedule, Sistina nimbly prepared breakfast with the helper fairies.

After preparing breakfast, Sistina returned to her room before going to wake up Lumia.

“Come on Lumia, it’s already past seven you know!? If you don’t get up now we’ll be late-”

“...Mmpf, Mnya...?”

Lumia drowsily ate her breakfast and prepared to set out for the academy.

Today, they left the Phebell residence slightly before eight, which was fairly normal.

Like any other day, the two happily talked about trifling topics as they steadily walked towards the academy.

In the past, this would continue until the two arrived at their destination, but...

“Ah, good morning sensei!”

“...Hmm, you’ve set another record for consecutive days where you haven’t been late.”

A familiar figure waited at the crossroad in front of them. It was Glen.

“...Mornin’ you two.”

As the two approached, he greeted them with an expression that screamed ‘I want to sleep’.

“Ahaha, Sensei... you don’t need to worry about me. It’s alright for you to just take your time in the morning.”

“...It’s fine. I like going for walks in the morning anyway. Once in a while, I just happen to take the same road you guys use to go to school and coincidentally bump into you guys along the way.”

Glen moved several steps behind them and began to follow.

Once it became clear that the ‘Wisdom of the Heaven’s Research Society’ were after Lumia, Glen escorted Lumia to and from the academy to the best of his ability.

However, Glen was an instructor and Lumia was a student. In the eyes of the students and faculty who didn't know the circumstances, Glen appeared to be meddling in her matters far more than necessary as an instructor. Thus, inconsiderate accusations of him being a stalker and him being perverted scum flew about the campus. To begin with, Glen was a polarizing type of person; if people liked him, they liked him a lot, if they hated him, they hated his guts. So for those who saw Glen as an eyesore, this was an excellent chance to strike.

Furthermore Lumia was an extraordinarily pretty girl. Unlike Sistina whose temperament made her hard to approach, Lumia bore a gentle demeanor and kind attitude that made it easy instead. It wasn't hard to see why she was very popular amongst the male students at the academy. Yet, in the face of Glen's over-involvement, she didn't seem at all dissatisfied, which resulted in jealousy and annoyance among her fans. This only further spurred their dislike for Glen.

As for Glen's students in class two, they had once been on the receiving end of his help, so they had a deeper impression of him and didn't shun him like many others. Even so, he had unexpectedly become the enemy of many male students of the academy.

However, Glen treated the slander and spite as no big deal.

He did not attempt to justify himself or voice his objection, he just continued to do what he thought he needed to. His bold attitude and determination to never stray from his course was akin to saint willing to be a martyr. Not only Lumia, but even Sistina, who saw everything occur as a bystander, could not help but show their honest respect for his actions.

Although Lumia felt pained that she was the source of the criticism onto Glen, she wouldn't tell him to stop. That would be belittling Glen's conviction.

"Then I'll be in your care today as well, Sensei. Thank you for

everything.”

That was why, as usual, Lumia did nothing more than express her gratitude as clearly as she could.

“A-ha-ha. What for? I don’t really know.”

And as usual, Glen pretended to be none the wiser.

The three continued walking towards the academy—

“Ah, by the way sensei, don’t we have a transfer student joining our class today?”

“Ah, right, try to get along with them alright?”

“But it’s pretty rare for someone to transfer in this time of the year...”

Even with the addition of Glen, the atmosphere had not changed, and the three continued to discuss trifling topics on their way to the academy.

However—

Today, there was something abnormal intruded into that normal scene.

“...Huh?”

Sistina noticed.

There was a young girl dressed in the academy’s uniform standing idly on the slope leading up to the campus’ front gate. The feature that drew Sistina’s attention was the girl’s vivid pale-blue hair, which one could easily distinguish even from faraway. Pale-blue hair was exceedingly rare within the empire, yet Sistina had no memory of such as distinguishable student.

Could that girl be the transfer student...? She’s wearing the uniform so...

As Sistina made her guess, the blue-haired girl seemed to sense their presence and turned around to face them.

In the next moment, she murmured something and placed her hand on the stone pavement, before pulling her hand

upwards.

...Eh?)

The girl suddenly pulled a claymore from the ground.

Her gaze was undoubtedly fixated on the three of them—

Almost immediately, the girl raised the sword and broke into a dash.

Cutting through the air in a straight line, she closed the distance between them at a staggering speed—

Faced with the sudden crisis, Sistina's mind went blank.

N-, No way, is that girl a—

Sistina could only think of one group that would attack them in broad daylight.

The mysterious magical association known as the Wisdom of the Heaven's Research Society.

Is she an assassin sent by them—?

I can't let her do what she wants... Lumia... I need to protect Lumia—

Sistina prepared herself to protect Lumia. For that purpose, she had asked Glen to teach her how to fight.

I will... protect...-!

However, her body refused to listen. It was as if time had stopped.

With the sudden appearance of an enemy and the sinister gleam of a blade, Sistina could not bring herself to move a single step.

"Sisti!"

Lumia stepped in front of Sistina to cover her—

In the same moment, the blue-haired girl kicked off the ground with a thump and leaped high into the air.

"...Eh?"

The young girl leaped right over Lumia and Sistina and

continued forward.

Then—

“DohWHAAAAAAAAAAAAA—!?”

Hearing the hysterical scream, Sistina came to her senses and looked behind her.

The girl swung her greatsword down at Glen who narrowly managed to catch it with his bare hands.

“W-, Wh-, What the hell are you doing—!? Are you trying to murder my ass!?”

Glen’s visage turned deathly pale. His eyes filled with moisture and his body began to quake as he roared at the girl that attempted to cut him in half.

If she were an assassin, this situation was a bit too strange.

“I wanted to meet you, Glen...” she murmured.

The girl made such a statement while pressing down on the sword; her eyes filled with drowsiness and her face expressionless.

“Stop being a pain in the ass! Answer my question, Riel! What the heck are you trying to do!?” Glen shouted as he released his grip on the sword and leaped to safety.

“A greeting.”

“You call this a greeting!? Well how about you go open up a dictionary and look up what ‘greeting’ means would you!?”

Hearing what Glen said, the girl showed a hint of doubt.

“...Was it wrong?”

“Of course it’s wrong!”

“But that’s what Albert told me. He said that comrades that haven’t met in a while should greet each other like this.”

“And you just up and believed him? Not to mention, all this is that guy’s fault!? Damn you Albert, do you hate me that

much!? I'll get back at you one day! Mark my words, damn it!"

"...Ow. Stop."

Glen shouted as he twisted his fists against each side of the girl's head.

Whatever the case, it didn't seem like they were fighting an assassin.

"Uhm... Sensei? That girl is..."

Lumia showed a mixed smile.

"Hm? Isn't she the girl from the Magic Games Festival...?"

Lumia suddenly came to a realization as to who the girl in Glen's hold was.

"Mhm, she is. I'm surprised you still remember. Anyway, have I told you guys about my time in the Imperial Court Magicians?"

"No, but... I had a feeling... that you were somehow involved with them..." Sistina mumbled, unsure how to answer.

"I see. Well, the details don't really matter. Basically, Riel... this girl over here, is one of my colleagues during my time as a battlemage. Lumia has met her before, but you should be familiar with her appearance, right White Cat? That being said though, the person you met that time was just Lumia who had transformed into her."

Sistina calmed down and took a closer look at the blue haired girl...at Riel.

Now that Glen had reminded her of their previous meeting, she did indeed recall the girl's appearance.

"I... I see... so she isn't an assassin... right? T-, Thank god..."

Perhaps due to the sudden release of tension, Sistina fell on her knees as she released a long, relieved sigh.

"Well... you guys have probably noticed by now, but this is

the rumored transfer student, or at least, that's how it looks like."

"...How it looks like?" Lumia said as she tilted her head.

"Mhm, the Imperial administration have decided to provide Lumia with an official bodyguard. So, they seemed to have decided to send someone from the Imperial Court Magicians, which is this girl over here."

"S-, so that's what it was... But you're telling me this girl is a battlemage... that's pretty impressive..."

Sistina stared in wonder at Riel. The Imperial Court Magicians were an elite group that consisted of the empire's top magicians. Despite appearing to be around the same age as herself, Riel was already a member of such a group.

With that in mind, the curt and petite girl in front of her seemed more reliable than ever.

"Your name is Riel... yes? It's been a while...hasn't it?"

Lumia quickly went to greet her.

"Mm."

"Let me reintroduce myself okay? I am Lumia, Lumia Tinsel, and this girl here is my friend, Sisti... Sistina. It's reassuring to have someone like you from the Imperial Court Magicians here with us. I'll be in your care from now on, okay?"

"...Mm, leave it to me."

Saying that, Riel stuck out her chest just a little, and expressionlessly followed.

"Everything will be alright. I will protect Glen."

"Eh?"

"...Huh?"

Riel casually made an outrageous statement. Lumia and Sistina could only stare blankly at her as they attempted to comprehend what she had said...

“IT’S NOT MEEEEEEEEEEEEEE—! What’s the point in trying to protect me you idiot!”

Glen noisily grinded his fists against the temples of Riel’s head.

“Ow. Stop.”

“OH REAAAAALLLLY NOW—!? Hey, do you understand why you’re here!? No really Riel, do you understand what your mission is!? It’s to protect that girl over there, you see her!? Yes her! That cute blonde haired cute girl Lumia-chan!? Yeah, you got that? Give me an okay!”



“...? Why?”

“Why? WHYYYY!? Don’t give me why! Did you even read the briefing!?”

“...But I don’t get it. I want to protect Glen more than Lumia.”

“Shut it! Do you think they sent you here to choose, dumba!?”

Glen scratched his head as he cried out of grief.

“More importantly, why did they end up sending Riel of all people!? Oh, maybe it’s cause her age is pretty close or whatever. HELLLLLL NO! No matter how you think this is a mistake! God bless! Bless the dear lords for their grace! Just what are those guys in the spec ops thinking choosing her for this! Have their minds kicked the bucket or something!?”

Before Lumia and Sistina, who stood still with their mouths wide in surprise, Riel stood there with drowsy apathy whilst Glen continued to aggressively make a fuss about the events happening around him.

...Will this be... alright...?

In amidst the scene, Lumia couldn’t help but feel a smidgen of unease.

“So anyway...”

The scene shifted to a different place.

Alzano Imperial Magic Academy’s year two class two’s classroom.

“A new student joining us starting today. Her name is Riel Rayford. Well, just get along with her okay guys?”

The student’s voices rose in unison when Glen led Riel to the classroom. The students – particularly the males – grew excited as the new student took to the podium.

“Oh...”

“...H-, How lovely.”

“Wow, her hair is so pretty...”

“She’s sort of like a doll isn’t she...”

A doll. It was true that this was a fitting analogy for Riel’s appearance.

Riel was about the same age as the other students of the class, but her facial features were much more babyish than one would expect from someone her age. Combined with her small stature, Riel looked younger than she actually was. Her hair was a rare pale-blue, and her marine blue eyes looked as if it were on the verge of succumbing to drowsiness. Yet, not a trace of emotion could be seen. However, her features were certainly elegant and she didn’t make any unnecessary movements either. Her tranquil, sculpture-like presence served to validate the doll analogy.

Despite her excellent features, the person in question didn’t seem to be at all interested in her own appearance. Her free-flowing hair was uncombed and unkempt, with the only semblance of care being the hair band that held her hair together near the back of her neck. Her pale beautiful hair that inspired jealousy was treated in a remarkably crude manner.

Even if one were to dock points for that—

“R-, Riel-chan is quite cute isn’t she...?”

“Rather, aren’t the girls of this class pretty high level overall...?”

“I’ve decided. I was never part of a faction, but I’m going to join the Riel-chan faction from here on out... Kai, what about you?”

“Hmm, you’re right Road... I guess I’ll join the Riel faction as well..”

“Hmpf... I have no eyes for anyone else but Wendy-sama! I will not switch!”

“Hey you guys over there, quit yapping for a second would ya!?”

Although it was all expected, upon seeing the new transfer student – particularly one as outstanding and uncommon as Riel – the students of the classroom, especially the males, began a clamor .

Oh geez, it'll only get harder to keep things under control if things go on like this...

Glen internally released a long sigh.

Well, it's not like I don't understand how they feel. As long as Riel keeps her mouth shut, she's most definitely a pretty girl with nothing to complain about... but again, that's as long as she keeps it shut...

“Ah—, well, anyway guys.”

Glen forcefully interrupted the ongoing conversations and pulled the student's attention back.

“I'm sure you guys are all curious about the new student joining us today, so I'll let her do a self-introduction. 'Kay then, the stage is yours, Riel.”

After that, the classroom fell silent. All the gazes gathered onto Riel.

Everyone was listening intently.

But...

“.....”

...Silence.

Even with all the gazes latched onto her, Riel remained standing there motionlessly.

The uneasy silence seemed to infect the whole class as well.

“...Hey, oi.”

Unable to take the silence any longer, Glen stuck a finger out and poked the Riel's head from the side.

"Did you not hear me? Or are you doing this on purpose?"

"...?"

Riel revealed a glimmer of puzzlement as she turned to glance at Glen.

"Uh... May I bother you to introduce yourself? I'm kinda clenched for time already, so pretty please?"

"...Why? What should I do to introduce myself?"

"Just hurry up and do it! I'm begging you already! Isn't there usually some sort of routine or script or something for this!? Just do that okay!?"

"...Mhm. Okay."

Riel lightly nodded her head, and took a step forward.

Then—

"...Riel Rayford."

She recited her own name and lowered her head slightly.

"....."

...Silence.

"...Go on?"

"...It's over."

The silence returned for a few seconds.

And then—

"Didn't you just say your name!? Heck, didn't I already told everyone your name when we first started!? Are you messing with me!? Even some brat in the smack middle of their adolescence who loves to say 'oh look at me I'm so cool not giving a friggin damn about stuff' would have introduced themselves a bit more seriously—!"

Glen held Riel's head in his clawed hands and shook her back

and forth, her hair scratching loudly against his fingers.

“But Glen, I don’t know what to say.”

“Anything’s fine, you know, like hobbies, special skills, that sort of thing! Anyway, just say what you can think of about yourself that would let everyone get to know you better! Got it!?”

“...Mhm. Okay.”

Riel nodded her head and stepped forth again.

“...I am Riel Rayford. I serve in the Special Operations sect of the Imperial Court Magicians, a wing of the Imperial Army. My rank is junior knight captain, and my codename is ‘The Chariot’. My mission is...”

“DAaaaAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA—!!
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH—!”

Glen suddenly released a strange cry, picked Riel up under his arm and flew out of the classroom.

“Uhm, what did Riel-chan say just now...?”

“Mhm, I couldn’t hear her really well... but something about the Imperial Army...”

Due to Glen’s shout, the students of the class couldn’t hear most of what the soft-spoken Riel had said.

However, the students could hear Glen, who had left the classroom, furiously shouting ‘You idiot!’ and ‘What the heck were you thinking!?’.

Then, a few minutes later—

After discussing something, the two returned to the classroom.

“...I hope to join the Imperial Army in the future and I came to this academy to learn magic. That’s what it is now. I’m from... erm, somewhere in Itelia...? My age is probably fifteen. My interests are... I think... reading. My special skills... what am I

supposed to say here again, Glen?”

“Don’t ask me.” Glen groaned as veins bulged from his temples.

After listening to Riel’s half-baked introduction, the students could only stare in bewilderment .

Turning a blind eye to the bafflement of the students, Glen pushed the conversation forward.

“And that was Riel Rayford’s introduction! Ahaha, oh my, she really is a normal student you can see anywhere isn’t she!? You guys, I know Riel’s super-duper bland and totally normal, perhaps even too normal, but get along with her okay!? Okay!? Well then, let’s get into our lecture for today...”

“Before that, may I please ask a question?”

One student, the twin-tailed noble lady named Wendy, raised her hand.

“I have a question for Riel. Do you mind?”

“Ah—, Riel’s just got here after a really long journey so I’m pretty sure she’s tired. You’re tired right? Of course you are. Mhm, that being the case, why don’t we leave the question for next...”

With an expression that laid his unpleasant feelings bare, Glen tried to brush the topic off, but...

“...Mm, ask me anything.”

“Hey you! Would it kill you to read the mood just a teensy tiny bit!? Or what is it now!? Do you have some grudge against me or something!?”

Then, in frustration, Glen scratched away at his hair and turned his head towards the ceiling.

“If you don’t mind, then I hope you answer. If I remember correctly, you are from the Itelia area yes? What about your family then?”

“!”

“...Family?”

Hearing the question, Glen peeked open his eyes, whilst Riel's eyebrows shifted slightly.

“...I had... a brother...”

“I see, so you have a dear brother. Fufu, what kind of person is he? Where is he right now? What kind of work does he do?”

There was nothing wrong with Wendy's question. Family-related questions were generally the most frequent ones after self-introductions.

However, for some reason, Riel body became rigid upon hearing the question, as if she had been caught off guard...

“My brother's... name is...”

Her expression twisted into a frown, and she pressed her hands against her head as if looking for an answer...

Her lips trembled as she lost herself trying to find the syllables...

“His name, is.... His name... name ... is...”

For some reason, Riel stagnated when asked for the name.

Her wrinkled brows and downcast head seemed a bit agonizing, even.

“Sorry. Please avoid questions related to her family.”

Carrying an uncharacteristically grave expression, Glen cut into the conversation.

“Actually, she has no relatives as of now... so could you guys let this one go?”

“Eh!? No way... but she did say ‘had’ and not ‘have’... I'm very sorry, Riel-san, I didn't know... I didn't mean to do that...”

Feeling ashamed, Wendy cast her eyes downward and

apologized to Riel.

“... It’s okay. There’s no problem.” Riel murmured.

Riel’s was usually deadpan, but on this rare occasion, an abyssal perplexment filled her expression.

“T-, Then what about this!”

A hero rose his hand as if to blow away the deathly atmosphere that permeated the room. It was the student who often took on the role of the leader among his peers, Cashew.”

“Riel-chan, what kind of relationship do you have with Glen-sensei? You two look like you know each other and seem to be really close. If you don’t mind, I would you very much like to know.”

With that question, Cashew served as a proxy for all the members of the class (especially the males).

“Ah, that’s right! I was really curious about that.”

“That’s what I thought too! We should take to chance to clear this up shouldn’t we?”

“For a while now I thought that with the way you two act you don’t seem to be just normal acquaintances...”

The class worked hard to follow up on Cashew’s lead.

The previous hustle and bustle quickly returned to the classroom.

“...My relationship, with Glen?”

“...Mm... A-, About that...”

What should I say?

Should I play the standard ‘distant relatives’ card here?

Glen hesitated for a mere moment to choose his words carefully...

“Glen is my everything. I’ve decided that I will live for his

sake.”

However, that moment of hesitation would cost him gravely.

“Say what—!? Riel, you—

Glen, startled, was not even given the chance to deny—

“KYAAAAAAAAA—! How bold~! How passionate~!”

“GAAAH! I fell in love at first sight, but my heart is already brokeeeeeennnn—!”

Female shrieks erupted alongside male outcries, lowering the classroom into a state of chaos.

“Forbidden relationship! It’s a forbidden relationship between a teacher and student~! Kya—! Kyaaa—!!”

“Ho? Not bad, sensei!”

“O-, Oh my what are you suggesting, Cashew-san!? This is a proooblem! It’s a big proooblem—!!”

“Damn it sensei... Despite how you are I respected you in some way... but that’s all over now... I haven’t felt this way in a while... How about we take a step outside—!? (cry)”

“You better watch your back when you’re out at night—! (sob)”

The female student who were fired up at the thought of this forbidden relationship. The honor students who thought the forbidden relationship was a problem. The greater part of the males who hoped to approach Riel at some point exuded a maelstrom of hatred. The imagination of the students collectively took flight to pioneer unjust suspicions of the relationship between Glen and Riel. The classroom became a massive free-for-all of shouting and screaming.

Then—

“Quit being noisy, Glen Ryders! Why in the world would you let your students freely partake in such idiotic antics!? Are you trying to interrupt my lectures!? Damn you, just how far

are you going to go to ruin me—!?”

Even the instructor of the neighboring class one, Harry, rushed over with a complexion that was actively changing hues—

...The situation was already beyond control.

“AAAAHHHH!?! I’ve had enough! How did it come down to thhhhiiiiisssssssssssssssssssss—!?”

A scream that came from the depths of Glen’s soul resounded throughout the academy.

Then, amongst the pandemonium of agonizing cries that seemed to come from hell itself, there was one person.

“...?”

Riel alone looked on in absentminded puzzlement as the scene continued to unfold.

Chapter 2: The Day-to-Day Life Falls into Chaos

“Ah, damn it all... Why is this happening to me...”

After skillfully coaxing Harry, who had stormed into the room and challenged him to a duel, to calm down, Glen also managed to clear up the misunderstanding regarding Riel (or so he thought).

The series of feuds had caused an inordinate waste of time, which meant that the lectures for today had fallen far behind schedule.

Without much choice, Glen decided to change the plans for today and began the practical lesson immediately.

Although the decision was made in a hurry, Glen had also considered that moving the class outdoors and having Riel work together with the other students would allow her integrate into the class better. If Riel could quickly get used to the class, then it would also make her bodyguard duties easier.

With that in mind, Glen brought the class to the magic-practice field.

Luckily for him, no other class was it during this class period. Here, they could fire off their magic without restraint.

“<Oh the thunder spirits' lightning>–!”

Sistina's clear voice spread through the vast field.

With vigor, she pointed the index finger of her outstretched left arm forward, and a trail of lightning shot forth.

The bolt flew two-hundred meters through the air and directly struck the human-shaped bronze golem.

These golem each had six circular targets on them. One on the head and chest, two on the legs and arms respectively. Sistina had struck the Golem's head dead center, leaving a small coin-shaped hole in the target.

"I did it!"

Sistina reflexively struck a small victory pose.

Cheers could be heard from the spectating students, amazed at Sistina's skills.

"Amazing... You can't really expect anything less of Sistina..."

"Man, noble ladies from prestigious households really are different..."

With gazes of admiration stuck to her back, Sistina returned to Lumia's side.

"That was amazing Sisti! You hit all six of your shots!"

Lumia was overjoyed as if she had been the one to do it instead.

On another note, Lumia had hit three out of six. She had managed to hit the chest and the right hand, hitting the left leg by accident when she had missed another target.

"Oh? Not bad white cat. It really is pretty impressive that you got all six from all the way over here."

Glen, impressed, marked down the results on the board.

Sistina appeared to be delighted when Glen had praised her, but her mood seemed to swing in the other direction immediately after as she turned her face away. Despite that, her cheeks were tinted slightly red.

"Mmmpf... D-, don't flatter yourself into thinking that you've won, Sistina!"

Wendy frustratedly bit on her handkerchief as she sent a stern glare towards Sistina.

Wendy had hit five out of six. She had smoothly struck down

the targets one after another, but sneezed when she fired her last shot."

"I can't accept it! Not when I was made to miss in such a fashion! Sensei, let me have one more chance! If I'm able to bring out my true abilities, I'm sure I won't lose to Sistina!"

"Yeah yeah, I got it I got it... Everyone's waiting for their turn so line up in the back okay miss clumsy?"

"MMMMMmmpf—!"

After smoothly pacifying Wendy's hysterics, Glen moved the program forward.

"Alright, next up is Cashew."

"Yup! That's me!"

It seemed that the relationship between Glen and Riel no longer weighed on the student's minds.

Since they were currently competing against one another, such thoughts were secondary at best. Everyone was focused on how they would demonstrate their skills at magic sniping.

"Erm... Zero out of Six... That said, you just barely missed every time... Hey Cashew, aren't you a tad unfocused...?"

"H-, Huh...? That's weird...?"

Cashew, having been unable to convert his abilities to results, dejectedly returned to the crowd of students.

"Well, if you missed by so little, it means you have talent. The rest just depends on practice really."

Glen didn't forget to follow up as he marked down the result on his board.

"Mm... I'll work hard..."

The fortuitous large-figured boy who had performed magnificently at the Magic Games Festival was now uncharacteristically dispirited. A sneer and chuckle escaped the mouth of a certain member of the class.

“Perhaps the delicate application of magic really is too much for someone with a personality as crude as yours?”

“S-, Shut up! If you have nothing useful to say then just leave me alone! Or are you looking for a fight you asshole!?”

Cashew, seemingly disgruntled by the provocation, angrily shouted at Gibel, who showed a condescending smile as he pushed his glasses upward.

“C-, Calm down Cashew! And Gibel, watch your words would you...”

The lady-faced boy, Cecil, flusteredly butted between the two in an attempt to defuse the situation.

On one side was the lone-wolf Gibel. On the other was the sociable Cashew. Given their opposing personalities, arguments between the two were commonplace.

Despite Gibel’s attitude towards Cashew, it didn’t seem like Cashew actually hated him deep down. No one could grasp whether the two truly got along well or not.

“...Man, what about you then, Gibel? Hm? Are you really that confident in yourself?”

“Hmpf. Just shut up and watch.”

“Oi, you’re up next Gibel. Come over here.”

Upon hearing Glen’s timely call, Gibel calmly stepped up to the designated sniping position.

.....

...Then—

“Damn, he really did get six out of six... His skills are as detestably good as always.”

“He’s still behind Sistina, but his grades really aren’t just for show...”

Cashew sulkily complained, while Cecil spoke out in admiration.

Shouldn't my performance be a given?

an expression that laid that feeling bare, Gibel's test ended without further ado.

"Hmm..."

After marking Gibel's result on the board in his hand, he looked over the student's scores once over.

Sistina and Gibel are performing great as usual.

Wendy missed one shot, but she definitely has the skills. As with today's result though, she doesn't seem to be able to carry it through when it matters. I don't really understand why, but if she performs like she usually does she wouldn't lose out to those two.

Amongst Glen's class, the performance of these three were particularly outstanding.

As for the rest, they're more or less the same. As a whole, the class averages about three out of six; Lumia performance is also around that. She's good at white magic, especially healing spells. The rest of her skills are also good enough to not be a problem.

That said, Cecil's performance is pretty surprising. He's the kind of student that does well in lecture, but has trouble putting that performance into practice. Ever since the Magic Games Festival though, his performance in magic sniping has improved by leaps and bound. His ability to focus on his studies is probably helping him out on this end.

The real worry is Rin, who has the same problem as Cecil. One out of six huh... She has a habit of closing her eyes just as she fires. Even if she's capable of hitting the target, it'll be hard to bring those skills out with this habit of hers. As for Cashew, his skills just need a little bit more polish. His sense for this is pretty good, so I don't think I needed to be worried about him. Rin will probably need a bit of guidance.

"Well then..."

After marking that down and summarizing his thoughts, Glen turned his eyes to the next student.

As if following his lead, the other student's gazes focused on

the next student.

Finally, it was time for the star of this event to take the stage

The student who was given the task of switching the target golems raised a hand to signal that everything was in place.

Seeing that, Glen called out to the last student.

“Alright Riel, it’s your turn. Do it.”

“...Mm”

“Listen up. Don’t hit the same target over and over again okay? You can only attack each target once. This is a rule for this test. Do you understand?”

“Mm, okay. I just have to destroy the targets with assault spells, right?”

“Mhm, that’s right.”

“Leave it to me then.”

On Glen’s prompt, Riel walked up the designated position.

“Now then... let’s see what you can do.”

“I wonder how many Riel-chan will hit...?”

“I think she’ll be good at this. She seems really cool-headed and focused all the time...”

“Oh, that reminds me, she said that her goal was to join the imperial army...”

The class paid close attention to Riel’s every movement.

Their reaction was given. Just what kind of skills did this newcomer have...? Everyone was curious.

Despite being the focal point of the class, Riel looked at the golem two-hundred meters away in a drowsy fashion—

“<Oh thunder spirits · With a shockwave of Lightning · Strike it down>”

Riel murmured through the chant and raised a finger in a deadpan manner—

The bolt of lightning flew two-hundred meters through the air. However, the bolt fired past the golem, far off to the right.

“””” ””””

Silence quickly overcame the class.

My... now that I think about it I've never seen her use black magic during my time in the army... But I never thought that she would be this bad...

Shocked, Glen's mind went blank. Sweat began to trickle down his forehead.

It was already obvious by the first shot. Riel was the worst at magic sniping in the class by a long shot.

“<Oh thunder spirits · With a shockwave of Lightning · Strike it down>”

Unable to read the mood in the slightest, Riel indifferently chanted the spell again.

This time, the bolt went wide to the left.

Needless to say, the bolt did not scratch the golem. Rather, it didn't even seem like it was going in its general direction.

Moments ago, the student's gazes were busy critiquing Riel, but now it was as if they were looking after a small child with great care.

“Riel-chan, relax! Relax!”

“Your stance is far too rigid. Relax your arms and stretch them out...”

“Don't give up! You still have four more shots!”

“Haha, isn't this great Cashew? It seems like you will have someone joining you after all.”

“...Hey, do you really hate me that much Gibel...?”

Riel continued the challenge.

However, the result was still the same.

One it was fired to the sky. The next struck the ground... Despite the advice of her classmates, it didn't seem like

Riel's [Shock · Bolt] would scratch the golem's anytime soon. Then, of the six shots allowed, she was down to her last.

"...Oi Riel. I really have to give it to you. How have you managed to survive to this day like that...?" Glen murmured, amused at the fiasco.

It was then that Glen noticed.

"Hm?"

Riel tilted her head slightly. It was only a little bit, but it seemed like Riel was dissatisfied by her performance.

"What's up, Riel?"

"Mm, I have a little question..."

Riel turned to face Glen and asked flatly.

"Hey Glen. Do we have to use [Shock · Bolt] for this?"

"I won't say you have to... but there aren't really any other assault spells that would reach the golem from all the way over here."

Glen looked at Riel doubtfully, having been asked such an odd question.

"So rather than having to use [Shock · Bolt] for this test, there aren't really other spells that students can use that are actually effective at this range."

"Basically, it doesn't matter what spell I use?"

"Well, I guess so..."

"I got it. Then I will use my forte."

"...Huh? Oi, I don't think I have to remind you, but military-grade magic is forbidden okay/"

"Okay, no problem."

Riel turned to face the golem two-hundred meters away.

"Do your best! This is your last shot!"

“Don’t give up!”

The class gave their warm encouragement as Riel chanted her spell.

“<I beseech all creation · thusly upon my hands · shall be a cruciform sword>”

Whack. Riel bent down and touched the floor, which erupted into a flash of lightning.

The next moment—

““““W-, WHHAAAAAT—!?”””””

A long cross-claymore appeared in Riel’s hands. A cross shaped cavity could be seen in the ground beneath her.



Using high-speed synthesis from the field of alchemy, she created a steel greatsword from the earth of the practice field in an instant.

“O-, Oi... Riel, what are you...?”

Glen managed to voice his unease, but it was all for naught—
Riel raised the sword above her head and—

“HAAAAIIIIIIYAAAA—!”

Giving it her all, she slammed her foot down—

Using her body as a charged spring, Riel flung the sword that exceeded herself in height.

The sword cut through the air with a sharp thunderous noise. With the spin of a gathering storm, it flew two-hundred meters in what seems like a instant—

BOOM! The sword crushed through the golem’s chest with intense cacophony.

Of course, nothing was left of six targets on the golem.

“””” ””””

The class stood there with eyes wide and gaping mouths...

“Mm. Six out of six.”

Although her drowsy expression remained unchanged, Riel murmured to herself with a hint of pride.

“...Um-, Hey Riel... I did say you have to use assault spells right...”

“Mhm, it was an assault spell... I used a sword I made from alchemy no?”

“Wrong... Your explanation is wrong on so many levels...”

Glen, stupefied, could only look to the heavens for advice.

As one would expect, the students now looked towards Riel with fear.

Even though Glen had gone through the trouble of setting this up, it was all in vain.

Thus—

Riel's debut to class two ended just like that.

Riel had made quite an explosive entrance.

In the end, the first impression the students of class two had of Riel were 'she's a weirdo', 'she's a freak', 'she's dangerous', and other similar comments. As a transfer student, her assimilation was undoubtedly an absolute failure.

To begin, Riel was extremely inexpressive, so it was hard to read how she was feeling. Furthermore, her half-open drowsy eyes made it seem like she was somewhat angry or displeased all the time, so it was hard to approach her. Finally, Riel herself would obviously not approach others for conversation.

Thus, after witnessing that scene of raw destruction that caused the hairs to jump off their skin, none of the students dared to even approach her.

...That being said.

“.....”

The afternoon break period.

Riel remained in her own seat, isolated from the rest of the class as if it were normal.

She didn't do anything, not even move her body in the slightest. She absentmindedly sat in her seat, and nothing more.

“Oi... Why don't you go say something to Riel-chan...”

“B-, But I mean... isn't she kinda scary?”

“Either way... Isn't she kind of weird? That strength of hers

can't possibly be human..."

It wasn't that the students wanted to ignore her. It was just that her doll-like expressions made it intimidating to approach. Combined with the monstrous strength she had demonstrated earlier, it was easy to see why it was hard to talk to her. No one was able to grasp the opportunity to start a discussion either.

"...That idiot."

Seeing Riel isolated from the rest of the class, Glen released a long sigh.

There wasn't much that Glen could do about the situation. Riel grew up in a rather special environment, so her ability to socialize with others was below a child's. She had caused a lot of trouble... but she was unable to grasp that fact.

That said... Seeing Riel all alone in such a lively classroom was a cause for sorrow for others. They couldn't help but think that she was rather pitiable.

Riel likely felt nothing about her current situation... but leaving her all alone wouldn't sit well with Glen.

"...I guess I have to."

Despite the current situation, we were comrades some time ago.

It's not like my reputation at the academy can get any worse either way. One or two more rumors about me won't hurt.

Glen moved to invite Riel to lunch...

"Oh?"

Someone else moved to Riel's side before Glen.

"Nice to meet you, Riel."

It was Lumia. Sistina followed shortly behind her.

"...?"

Riel glanced at Lumia.

She didn't move her body at all, merely turning her eyes upwards to meet Lumia's gaze. The intensity of Riel's stare was rather frightening.

However, Lumia calmly matched her gaze, and showed a smile.

"It's the afternoon break period right now.... What are you planning to do about lunch?"

"...Lunch?"

Riel turned her eyes away, and fell silent for a short moment.

Then she turned her eyes up to face Lumia again, and said:

"There's no need. I'll be fine even if I don't eat for three days."

"Eh? Y-, You shouldn't do that... It's bad for your body okay?"

Lumia wryly smiled.

"You have to eat well. I mean, it'll get in the way of your work won't it, Riel?"

"...You're not wrong."

Rather than just her eyes, Riel abruptly turned her head upward to face Lumia in a more upright fashion.

"But I don't know what to eat. I wasn't assigned any rations for this mission. I ate the rations I saved up from my other missions on the way here."

...She really does have a serious problem, thought Glen as he looked on from faraway.

The rations Riel referred to were undoubtedly the portable foodstuffs that the army used for field operations – a mix of beans, barley, potato and various grains that knead and cooked into hard blocks.

Heck, just what kind of idiot organization would have full-time bodyguards eat nothing but field rations anyway? More importantly, what was Riel planning to do about food then?

Now that I think about it, I've never seen her eat anything other than those shitty tasting rations... Don't tell me... did she eat nothing but that all this time?

"Ah, if you don't know what to eat... then why don't you come with us to the cafeteria? We were just about to head there.""

"...Cafeteria? ...What's that."

"Mm... somewhere you go to eat... I guess? So, do you want to go?"

"....."

Riel fell silent.

It was hard to tell, but it seemed like her eyes were blinking faster. It seemed like she couldn't quite come to a decision, perhaps due to her inexperience with eating meals with girls of the same age.

"Hey Riel, you don't have to force yourself... alright?"

Sistina spoke out, unable to stand the silence.

"It's just that we'll be together for a long time from now onwards, so wouldn't it be better to get to know each other more? Not to mention, meals are more enjoyable with others."

"...Enjoy? ... I don't really understand..."

Riel ruminated on the thought for a while, before glancing towards Glen.

Glen raised his chin, gestured for Riel to go.

Seeing that, Riel nodded and stood from her seat.

"Mm. Okay. I'll go."

"Fufu, great. Let's go going then, shall we?"

Riel followed Lumia and Sistina's lead, as murmurs started to shoot around the classroom.

The students that remained in the room watched as the

group gestured to leave.

“L-, Lumia is really brave...”

“Will they be alright...? Inviting that girl to lunch...”

Ignoring the discussion going on in the classroom, Lumia and Sistina moved towards the door to the hallway, passing by Glen in the process.

“...Riel’s all yours.”

Glen whispered as Lumia passed by.

“Yes.” Replied Lumia with a sweet smile.

“...Geez louise.”

After seeing the three of them off, Glen scratched his head and sighed.

Man, I really can’t tell what’ll happen from here. As a bodyguard, Riel should’ve found some reason to approach Lumia first, but here it turned out to be the other way around. Even for crappy bodyguard this should’ve been common practice. I really think the people who chose her for this mission are nuts.

But...

“...On second thought, this might be a good chance.”

Despite the hardships the situation wrought, Glen had to admit that.

Riel’s never had a normal upbringing. Even at her age she’s serving as a battlemage of the Imperial Court Magicians. Of course, there are a lot of complicated issues that force her to be involved with them... but it can’t be denied that it has hindered her growth as a person. Although her personality wouldn’t make it impossible to keep on living like this, there’s definitely something missing.

However—

If her mission forces her to associate with a lot of people, then it might be good for her in the long run. This might be a good chance for her to grow, spiritually and mentally.

If she could get along well with Lumia and Sistina, then in the future... Glen carried such hopes.

Hmm, thinking about it that way, this mission might be most suited for Riel in terms of her needs, but that doesn't take away from the fact that the people who decided on this have a screw loose. If I ever see those people I would want to slap them a few hundred times.

"Now that I think about it, it's almost time for the 'Field Study' isn't it..."

This will probably be the first time Riel will go out to play with people her age. I just hope that something will come out of this for her... thought Glen.

"Well, I should also go get something to eat."

After the three left, Glen also prepared to head to the student cafeteria.

He could've just gone to the canteen to get something simple to fill his stomach, but he felt like going to the cafeteria today.

...It's not like I'm really worried about them.

With a fleeting thought, Glen excused his behavior to no one in particular.

Glen quietly hurried to the cafeteria.

"This is Alzano Imperial Magic Academy's cafeteria."

As planned, Lumia and Sistina led Riel to the academy's cafeteria.

"How is it? Isn't it big? Were you surprised?"

Riel blinked blankly as Lumia introduced the cafeteria with a delightful smile.

The wide cafeteria was lined with long tables covered in white cloth. The tables were also decorated with candle stands, which gave the cafeteria a classy feel.

A large group of students crowded the kitchen counter, where they waited for their orders to be served. After retrieving their food, they would find a seat and engage in friendly conversation with their peers.

Today too, the cafeteria was filled with energy unique to lunchtime.

“There are a lot of people... and something smells good...”

“The food here is cheap and delicious. It’s quite popular amongst the students here.” Sistina explained as she brushed her loose hairs aside.

“People who come from wealthier backgrounds... such as the sons and daughters of conglomerates and high nobles, tend to choose to eat outside the academy in more luxurious restaurants. On the other hand, there are those who come from more humble backgrounds that prepare their own meals instead. That said, more than half the students of the academy use the cafeteria on a regular basis.”

On that note, as someone who came from a famous family of magicians and belonged in the upper-echelons of society, Sistina would have no monetary troubles eating luxurious meals outside the academy on a regular basis. However, having grown-up eating her mother’s handmade meals, she bore a commoners palate that preferred simpler tastes. Although a rarity amongst nobles, she would mostly go to the cafeteria for lunch.

Returning to the topic, it appeared that Riel had not paid attention to Sistina’s explanation.

In Riel’s mind, food was merely rations of energy to be taken in the midst of a bloody battlefield; a necessary chore for bodily maintenance.

So the appetizing scent and harmonious scenery during meals was a first for her.

Riel seemed overwhelmed by this unknown landscape.

“Why don’t we go make our order, Riel?”

Lumia pulled Riel by the hand through the crowd of people and headed towards the counter.

On the other side of the counter, they could see the large number of chefs preparing meals as if it were a battle.

“Mm, it seems like there’s a lot of good food today... What should I get?”

Lumia looked at the menu written on a board set up next to the counter.

“I’ll have the usual.” Said Sistina with disinterest.

She didn’t even bat an eye at the board.

“Two scones again? You’ve only been having that for lunch recently Sisti... It’s not good for your body if you don’t eat well okay?”

“Y-, You don’t have to tell me that... I’m fine with eating just that!”

“You’re not even close to fat though, Sisti... You might even be too skinny...”

“T-, T-, That’s not the problem! It’s not that I’m worried about getting fat, I just don’t want to feel sleepy during afternoon lecture okay...-!”

Sistina vehemently tried to explain herself as Lumia received it with a wry smile.

“By the way Riel, what are you getting?” Lumia turned to ask Riel.

However, she didn’t get a reply.

“.....”

On closer inspection, it seemed like Riel’s eyes were glued to a nearby table. More precisely, what a certain girl was eating. In the girl’s hands was a strawberry tart. Whilst talking to her friends, the girl happily munched down on the strawberry

tart.

“.....”

Riel's appeared to be captivated by the glamorous appearance of the tart.

Although her drowsy expression remained, her eyes seemed to shine with curiosity.

“Riel... Would you like to eat that?”

Lumia took the opportunity and asked Riel.

Riel turned her eyes to look at Lumia.

“Can... I eat that?”

“Yup, if you order it you can have it. Let's go order okay?”

Riel seemed to be thinking deeply about it and fell silent for a brief moment...

Finally, she nodded her head.

...After a while.

“How does it taste?”

“.....”

Near a corner of the cafeteria, Riel nibbled on a strawberry tart with great focus.

She carried the strawberry tart in two hands, treating it with great care and ignoring Lumia's question. She silently partook in the strawberry tart, which, rather than greedily devouring, she gnawed it little by little like a small animal eating a berry...

“It looks like she likes it...”

Sistina shrugged her shoulders slightly, before delicately cutting a scone with a knife and feeding it into her mouth with a fork.

After that, she took another glance at Riel.

Actually, this was already Riel's sixth tart.

She had been hesitant to bite into her first, but she hadn't stopped eating since, as if she had been possessed by the tart. The first was gone in a blink of an eye. After that, she asked for more and more.

"...I-, I'm jealous."

Sistina couldn't help but murmur that as she compared the scones on her plate and the tart in Riel's hands.

"Hm? What the problem, Sisti?"

"Ugh... No matter how much you won't get fat, rather, all those calories effectively become 'growth' for you, so I'm sure you won't understand what I mean, Lumia..."

Sistina enviously compared the compared Lumia's chest and Lumia's meal.

Lumia's meal consisted of a small piece of bread, roast beef, cheese salad, and corn soup.

It must have something to do with our metabolisms. No matter how much Lumia eats, she never gets fat at all. Not only that, the 'parts' that I'm jealous of grow steadily as a result.

Chances are I can't eat as much as her without having to worry.

If I did eat that much, I'll probably grow in the places where I want it the least, like my waist or my arms.

God really is unfair.

"Hah..."

Sistina glanced at Riel and sighed.

I want to stuff myself with sweets without having to worry about gaining weight like Riel. I want to eat until I'm full like Lumia.

Eating at the same table as the two gluttons grinded down on Sistina's mental fortitude.

"Even so..."

Sistina, resting her chin in the palm of her propped up hand,

took a second look at Riel.

Riel was still dreamily nibbling away at a tart.

...She's just an innocent girl after all.

Such a thought crossed Sistina's mind.

To be honest, she had been afraid of Riel.

She had suddenly swung a sword at Glen, and there was also the incident at the practice field earlier today. Although she only knew a little bit of magic, there was nothing that Sistina could do about her brute force that seemed like a calamity in and of itself. After that showing earlier, Sistina wondered how Lumia could approach Riel as if nothing was wrong.

But after seeing her innocently nibble on the tart... Sistina thought that she was dumb for having been so afraid and cautious of Riel this entire time.

"...Do you want one?"

Then, noticing Sistina's gaze, Riel raised her head to face Sistina.

"...Ah, well, not really, but..."

"I can give you some if you'd like."

Saying that, Riel split the tart she was eating in half...

"....."

Then, she reflexively stopped her hand. She stared at the tart in one hand with her drowsy eyes; the hesitation could be felt in her eyes. Her forehead seemed to be a bit scrunched as well.

Sistina showed a knowing smile to Riel's obvious reaction.

"Ah—, you don't have to force yourself. You want to eat all of it right?"

"...Can I?"

"It's okay. If I really wanted to I can just go buy it myself."

Riel seemed to calm down after that and returned to nibbling on the tart.

She's certainly not a bad person... She's just kind of weird, that's all

Although Riel was a bit... cold, so to speak, she didn't explicitly do anything to gain other's enmity. Rather, she seemed like the sort of person whose actions would bring a smile to others faces given enough time.

"Geez Riel... You have cream all over your face... Pay attention when you're eating..."

With a sigh, Sistina took her handkerchief out and reached her hand across the table towards Riel's face. Lumia happily observed the two.

"Don't move okay? ... There, that's better."

"Mm... thanks."

If I had a little sister, maybe she'd be someone like her?

Sistina mind idly drifted towards such a possibility.

"There aren't many empty seats at the cafeteria today.... What shall we do?"

"Ah... Wendy... There's some seats over there."

"Oh my, I see it. Let's go there then."

Familiar voices approached Sistina's table.

Sistina turned around to look...

"My? Sistina?"

"Wendy.... and Rin."

Wendy and Rin each carried a tray in their hand.

"It's rare to see you here, Wendy. I didn't think that you of all people would use the cafeteria."

Sistina, as if seeing the unexpected, blinked her eyes a few times.

"Aren't you the standard for those who go outside the

academy to eat at luxurious restaurants? And for Rin to be with you... What's come over you today?"

"Hmpf, occasionally inspecting the commoner's dining situation is the duty of nobles."

"I-, I, uhm... happened to meet Wendy at the entrance to the cafeteria, so..."

Wendy boastfully raised her chest whilst Rin nervously explained the circumstances.

Then, a good idea seemed to flash in Lumia's mind, and she clapped her hands together with a smile.

"Right! Would you two like to join us for lunch? You can also get to know Riel better."

"Eh?"

"I'm sure it'll be more fun and enjoyable to eat with more people."

"T-, That's..."

"...Uhm..."

However, the two seemed hesitant to accept Lumia's invitation. The two snuck glances at Riel, who sat across from Lumia.

The scene of Riel's display of superhuman strength and the following destruction was probably playing through their minds.

Wendy's usual composed expression that befit a noble seemed to crumble a little and sweat could be seen forming on her forehead. Rin, who was more timid, seemed to hide behind Wendy.

In the end, the two couldn't choose between 'Yes' or 'No' and remained silent...

"...You can't?"

Lumia showed a slightly sad smile. It was then that—

“Yo, cuties! If you don’t mind, I’ll be joining in as well!”

A cheerful voice came from behind, which, although out-of-place, blew away the tension in the air.

“It’s rare for the pretty girls from our class to be gathered together in one place! How could I let this chance go!?”

“Ahaha, geez Cashew. Would you all mind if I joined as well? I have something I want to talk to Riel about.”

The big-statured Cashew and female-faced Cecil arrived on scene.

“My, I don’t see you two here very often. Cecil aside, I didn’t know that you used the cafeteria, Cashew.”

Sistina looked on in puzzlement as her classmates, who didn’t frequent the cafeteria, showed up one after another.

“I got a payday from my part-time at the transcription store yesterday, so I thought I might splurge a little today.”

Cashew and Cecil’s hands were completely occupied with filled plates. Ignoring Wendy and Rin, Cashew dropped his plates next to Lumia, directly across from Riel. Cecil followed suit by sitting down next to Cashew.

“Yo, Riel-chan!”

Perhaps startled by Cashew’s vigor, Riel turned her eyes away from the tart and blinked her eyes blankly at him.

“In class just now, you made that crazy sword and sent it flying through the air... That was pretty amazing! Just how did you do it?”

“Amazing? Me?”

“Mhm. I’ve never seen magic like that before.”



“I’m sure that you used body enhancement magic along with raw physical strength to send the sword flying... but you used alchemy to make the sword didn’t you? The speed at which you synthesized it was super fast. Where did you learn to do that?”

Cashew and Cecil fired off questions one after another.

“Hey, could you teach me how to do that!? If I could learn to synthesize stuff that quickly, I might be able to use it for other things!”

“I’m more curious about what kind of synthesis form you use.”

“.....”

Riel, as if pondering something, fell silent for a brief moment...

“...Mm. I’ll teach you two if I have time.”

“Ooh! Alright! Thanks a ton!”

Cashew then turned around to look at Wendy and Rin, who remained frozen in place.

“Hey Wendy, Rin, do you guys want to learn it too? I’m sure that learning this will help us rise through the magician ranks.”

The two glanced at each other for a brief moment before nodding their heads, and asked...

“It’s true that your synthesis speed is frightening, Riel... but how do you explain your ability with [Shock · Bolt]?”

“A-, Ahaha... It’s not like I did any better though...”

Wendy and Rin sat down around Riel.

“I never really learned black magic.”

“Oh dear.... [Shock · Bolt] is the very basic of black magic assault spells is it not? If you don’t practice it thoroughly, how

do you expect to raise your magician rank?"

"Ugh... oh, it hurts...!"

"Well, if you would like, I wouldn't mind teaching you, Riel."

"....."

Hearing Wendy's suggestion, Riel turned to glance at Lumia. Lumia replied with a delightful smile.

"It's alright Riel. I think it would be great if she teaches you."

"...Okay. Teach me."

Although Riel would never initiate a conversation, her replies to others were generally clear. Although her attitude was a bit cold, she was unexpectedly able to hold a normal conversation.

"Thanks, Cashew-kun."

As Riel became the center of conversation, Lumia voiced her thanks to Cashew.

"Well, she's a bit weird, but if I seem a new classmate getting ostracized like that I don't think I'll be able to live it down if I ignore it... so there's really nothing to thank me for."

Then, with a know-it-all smile—

"If you'd like to thank me, would you mind going on a date..."

"Ah, I'll have to politely decline. Sorry, Cashew-kun." Lumia declined with an angelic smile.

Having been ruthlessly rejected, Cashew placed his head face first into the table with a *thud*.

"Ahaha, you just got rejected didn't you, Cashew... what a shame."

"Shush~ Just leave me alone..."

Cashew replied sulkily to Cecil's consolation.

"Even so, I'm happy that other people are willing to approach Riel."

“W-, Well... to be honest, I was actually scared of her...”
Cashew uneasily admitted.

“But I saw you guys talking to each other... and even though it was a bit weird, she didn’t seem like a bad person either... I mean, just look at her.”

Riel continued to silently gnaw at a tart whilst listening to Wendy and Sistina’s petty arguments.

“...Cute isn’t it?”

“Yup, it’s pretty cute.”

Lumia couldn’t help but smile. Cashew quickly agreed with her.

“Why was I ever scared of such a cute girl I wonder... Not to mention, if Sistina could accept her, that means she’s definitely not a bad person. The rest of the class were all scared of her, but I’m sure they’ll be able to understand in time.”

“Cashew-kun...”

“The ‘Field Study’ is starting in a bit isn’t it? I’m sure it’ll be more interesting with more people.”

“Yup, that’s right. I hope that everyone can have fun.”

The two said with a smile.

“Man... it doesn’t seem like I need to do anything huh.”

In the cafeteria, Glen released a relieved sigh as he observed Lumia’s group from out of view.

Although the passing students looked at Glen with disdain, he didn’t really mind at all.

“How should I say this... My students are all really good people at heart...! Mm... I’m truly blessed to have students like them...-!”

Glen covered his eyes as if overcome with emotion.

“Alrighty, now that that’s settled, Glen-sensei shall coolly slip away...”

Immediately after, Glen remembered something very important.

“Wait, I haven’t eaten lunch yet haven’t I!? Shit, I was so busy observing them that I totally forgot! O-, Oh shit!? How much time do I have until break en—”

Glen was immediately interrupted by the loud growl of his stomach—

At the same time, the academy’s bell, which announced the end of afternoon break, cruelly rung.

“WH-, WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAATTT—!?”

Glen’s cries of despair and the bell formed a loud ensemble...

.....

—I saw – a dream.

It was a fragment of my childhood days. It was during the time where I was trapped by the Wisdom of the Heavens Research Society.

“Sniff... Hick...uugh...”

“What is it, □□□□? Did something happen?”

My brother tried to comfort me as I cried, curled up into a ball hugging my knees.

“I... I... killed... her.... Lida... The organization...ordered me to...-!”

“What did you say!?”

“Fuck! What the hell is this!?”

My brother’s close friend, □□□□, who stood beside him, loudly struck the wall.

“The organization is probably holding those shitty □□□□

practices aren't they!? For high speed synthesis of weapons and their secret assassination blade techniques... Shit! I didn't think they'd force comrades to kill one another...!? Are we really just throwaway tools to them...! Goddamnit!"

"Calm down, □□□□."

"□□□-!? But...-!"

"Without the organization's support, orphans like us would have nowhere to go... That much is true."

With a sorrowful expression, my brother turned towards his close friend □□□□ and shook his head. Then, he looked me in the eye.

"It must've been hard for you, □□□□. While I'm sorry about what happened to Lida... As my only blood relative left, I'm glad you were the one who lived in the end... So..."

"B-, Brother... I-, I'm scared...."

Back then, I could only remain sane by telling my brother all about the swelling anxieties I had.

"I feel like... my heart... is dying, little by little... I feel like with each passing day, I'm becoming more and more like a doll... Recently, even that feeling... is starting to fade..."

"It'll be okay... Everything will be okay..."

However, my brother always encouraged me and supported me.

"One day, we'll leave this organization for good. I will do whatever it takes. Then, we'll be free to live our lives. Until then... Until that day... Please, □□□□. Work hard... do whatever it takes..."

"Brother... □□□..."

Yes. The reason I managed to keep living back then... was due to my brother.

Because my brother is here... I can keep on living.

“Hey □□□□. If, you... are able to escape this organization, what do you want to do?”

However, what I remember is all ‘white’. Maybe it was too long ago, the backgrounds were white, and dialogues were white. Everything was a blank slate of white.

Even my brother’s face seemed to be hidden behind a white fog. I can’t quite tell.

Everything was already vague and fuzzy, I can’t quite remember. It was a vestige of a time long past—

—A white memory.

.....

“Hey Riel. I know I don’t have the right to say anything since I fell asleep on my first day here... but would you mind acting a bit more like a student...?”

“.....?”

My mind which was visiting the past returned to the present.

After waking up, I slowly raised my head.

It seems like I fell asleep on the desk. I rubbed my eyes whilst looking at my surroundings.

This was a classroom in Alzano Imperial Magic Academy.

It seemed like the lecture had ended some time ago and we were now in a break period. There was a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. Some students were busily chatting with one another, while others left the room. Overall, it was noisy.

Glen stood next to me with an amused expression as he released a sigh. He looked down at me.

I stared at Glen’s face.

“...What is it? Is there something on my face?”

...This might be the reason I saw that nostalgic dream.

Somehow, Glen seemed very similar to my brother, whose face had been hidden by some sort of fog.

“...Geez”

Glen released a long sigh as Riel rubbed her eyes.

It had been a week since Riel arrived at the magic academy.

With her actions on the first day, Riel had splendidly formed a mental barrier that distanced herself from the other students of the class. Just what would Riel pull off in her following days as a student...? This was a question that weighed heavily on Glen's mind at the beginning.

After all, given Riel's reckless and headlong tendencies, which were closely followed by episodes of heroism, she had undoubtedly made a name for herself at Imperial Court Magicians, for better or for worse. Not to mention, these episodes were too many to count. For example...

One: If the enemy is more numerous than oneself's, then cut them all down through spirit.

Two: If the enemy's defenses cannot be crushed by one's blade, then destroy the defense through spirit, and then cut them down.

Three: If the enemy is faster than oneself, then make yourself go faster than the enemy through spirit, and then cut them down.

Four: If the enemy has placed a trap, then cut down the trap along with the enemy through spirit.

...And such. That was one of numerous trusted and traditional examples from Riel's art of war.

Yet, the worst part of her disposition was the fact that she had the unparalleled power and dexterity to carry out her unintelligible brute force strategies. Thus, she left a clear-cut combat record.

The heretical magicians that Riel had defeated in the past,

were probably scratching their heads in hell wondering why they had lost to such a girl. Yet, the only conclusion there appeared to be was that they had been Riel's opponent.

In any case, Riel was abnormal in various ways. To make matters worse, her mind was estranged from the common sense of the world. It wasn't exactly strange for any sort of trouble to occur when she was around.

However — in the end, these were all needless anxieties.

"Riel, it's afternoon break now. Would you to come to the cafeteria with us again?"

"...Lumia? Sistina? ...Okay. I'll come."

"Hey Riel. Are you going to eat strawberry tarts again? Don't you get tired of it? I'm hardly one to talk, but your diet isn't balanced if you eat like that. You've been eating nothing but strawberry tarts since you came haven't you?"

"It's okay, Sistina, because... strawberry tarts... taste good."

"Hah... That's not a reason. You can't be this picky with your food."

"Ahaha, ever since I recommended the tarts to her, she's become its captive, hasn't she?"

"....."

Like every day, Glen saw the three off as they left for the cafeteria.

The reason Riel hadn't encountered any great trouble yet... was most likely due to Lumia and Sistina.

Regardless of whether it was in or out of the academy's grounds, the two would follow Riel (who, as a result, fails as a bodyguard) and cover for her when problems arose due to her lack of common sense.

"Hey Riel, Why don't you try to eat something else today? I'm sure there are tasty dishes other than strawberry tarts."

“But... I want to eat strawberry tarts.”

For Lumia, Riel was a benefactor who (sort of) protected her. On top of that, given Lumia’s personality, she couldn’t bring herself to ignore Riel, who wasn’t able to get used to life as a student.

“You really are a stubborn girl aren’t you...? Listen Riel, you can’t be so picky with your food at such a young age okay? If you don’t eat a healthy and balanced diet, your body will suffer as a result.”

“Yup... that said though, Sisti, you can’t really lecture someone else on that...”

“I-, I’m fine as I am! Don’t mind me!”

Sistina didn’t really bear any goodwill towards Riel at the beginning, but after having approached Riel with Lumia, she seemed to think of her as a troublesome little sister of sorts.

At some point, the three of them being together became the norm.

“Oh, you guys are together again? You sure get along well!”

“My my. By the way, Sistina, we’ll be tending the medicinal gardens for our next lecture period. Try not to be so involved in your chatting that you arrive to lecture late like you have previously.”

Cashew and Wendy’s acceptance of Riel also contributed greatly to Riel’s transition into school. The other students began to open up to Riel more under the lead of the class’ central figures.

Since they had managed to accept a maverick like Glen as well, it demonstrated that the class as a whole was fairly bighearted. Although Riel would occasionally make some outrageous announcements regarding Glen, she was meshing together with the class slowly but surely.

R-, Riel of all people... might actually have a fairly normal school life...

Glen was surprised, but at the same time he was also moved. However, of course, not everything went so smoothly. An anomaly like Riel leading a normal life would surely have some negative influences.

“So then... it becomes this... Then, you perform Markious’ operation on the elemental array here... like this... After that, you do this to calculate the origin’s elemental values for Flamea, Aques, Soilre, Airel, and Etherio and return those values individually... Then here... You can do this to reorder the origins... and then restructure the physical material....”

<TL Note: Read as ‘Flamea, Aques, Soilre, Airel, and Etherio’, written as ‘Fire, Water, Earth, Air, Spirit.’ in Japanese>

Afterschool—

Several students were huddled around Riel’s table. Under their intense gaze, Riel pushed a feather pen across a sheet of paper. Written on the numerous sheets of paper was a set of extremely complicated synthetic formulas used to switch the order of elements as well as the magic formula used to control the synthesis.

It was Riel’s alchemy – a magic formula for high speed weapon synthesis.

After today’s final lecture, alchemy, the students that stuck around gathered together to chitchat. Eventually, they moved onto Riel’s alchemy technique that she had displayed on the first day. Finally, after a series of events, they had her attempt to explain it to everyone present.

“...Understood?”

Riel lowered her feather-pen.

“Yeah, I didn’t get it at all.” Cashew, who had given up halfway through, cheerfully said.

“Amazing Riel, I lost track of what you were saying at some

point..." Lumia agreed with a wry smile.

The students present more or less bore the same thoughts as Cashew and Lumia.

"It's incredible..."

"What is this... Just who made this formula...?"

Cecil, who was excellent in theory classes, and Sistina, who stood at the top of her class year, could understand Riel's explanation to a certain extent, but they were still at a loss for words.

Magic formulation and functions were not the focus of the general curriculum at the academy, so were it not for Glen's maniacal lectures on how to create formulas and functions using rune-language from scratch, the two would likely have not been able to understand Riel's explanation in the slightest.

"What can I say...? No matter how hard I thought about how to create a Damascus steel sword in such a short amount of time, I couldn't figure it out... but who would've thought that a bug in rune-language could be utilized in such a fashion..."

Sweat trickled from Cecil's forehead as he voiced his admiration.

Damascus steel was created by adding layers of carbon in a cyclic fashion throughout the composition of ordinary steel elements. It was far more rigid and sturdy compared normal steel.

In the empire, those who possessed the forging skills to manufacture Damascus steel were far and few between, which led to annually production being equally low. Ongoing research attempted to manufacture large quantities Damascus steel through alchemical means.

However, that it was extremely difficult to achieve permanence in a synthesized product. Even if the synthesis was successful, the composition could only be maintained

temporarily. With the added difficulty and complexity of the elemental array, it would probably take an extreme amount of time to properly synthesize the product... This was the common knowledge that had been publicized by the Imperial Magic Academic Society regarding the research of Damascus steel.

Although Riel's formula did not resolve the issue of impermanence, its speed was in a different league of its own. It was nothing less than shocking.

Even if the formula was submitted to the Academy Society, it would probably be seen as an impossible, bogus theory, and quickly be brushed off with a laugh— unless Riel were to demonstrate the usage and control mechanisms firsthand. That was the extent to which the alchemical sequence appeared to be formed on baseless assumptions.

"I can see why this wouldn't be used in the Imperial army either..."

Cecil exasperatedly exhaled.

"Riel... Do you use this all the time?"

Sistina looked at with great concern.

"If you mess up even a single step, your brain's processing capacity will overload and you'll probably become a vegetable you know?"

"...Is that so?"

"Yes!"

"...I didn't know."

Despite Sistina's stern warning, Riel didn't seemed fazed in the slightest. She maintained her usual drowsy expression immaculately.

"Gosh... That said, just what is this nonsensical way of utilizing the user's deeper consciousness!? Aren't there zero considerations for the user's safety!? It's obvious that

whoever made this formula views the users of this as nothing more than disposable objects!”

Voicing her anger, Sistina vigorously turned towards Wendy.

“Hey, don’t you think so too!? Wendy!”

“.....Eh?”

Wendy, who had been dazed by Riel’s explanations, came to when Sistina called her out.

“O-, Of course! Sistina is completely correct in that matter! A formula with no considerations for its user is unbecoming of a noble... I realized all this in the beginning!”

For some reason, sweat could be seen forming on Wendy’s forehead and her articulation was also unclear.

“Now now.”

Lumia interrupted the conversation and attempted to calm Sistina down.

“Anyway, it’s impressive that Riel is able to use such a complicated formula.”

“It’s because I practiced a lot.”

“I-, I’m amazed you’re still alive.”

Sistina’s cheeks stiffened upon Riel’s indifference.

There’s a question that needs to be answered.

I heard from Glen-sensei that Riel had been a part of the Imperial Court Magicians, but does that mean that the army is forcing their soldiers to carry out life-endangering practices? There’s something wrong with this. To start with, Cecil said that Riel’s formula wasn’t used anywhere in the Imperial army.

So where did Riel learn this magic?

“Don’t try to mimic this magic alright everyone? Using this would require an incredible talent and sense with alchemy. For Riel to be able to utilize this magic to her extent means that this is practically her Original Magic.”

Sistina sensed that it would be foolish to pursue the matter any further. Thus, she tried to direct the conversation away from such a question.

“There’s no way I can even try to do that...”

“I don’t think anyone other can Riel can do it...”

“W-, Well, I have faith that I would be able to do it if I try, but... Fu, fuun, I suppose it is a formula that is lacking in grace required for a noble... Therefore, it is unsuitable for someone of my like!”

Then—

Baam! Someone roughly exited their seat. The loud noise echoed throughout the room.

“...Gibel?”

The origin of that noise was none other than Gibel, who sat a short distance away from Riel and had not contributed to the conversation.

“O-, Oi Gibel, what’s up with you, why did you suddenly...”

“...I’m going home. Rather than waste time messing around with you people, would it not be better to go home and strive to make an effort to study magic?”

With great irritation, Gibel shoved his textbooks, notes, and other belongings into his bag.

“Huh? You don’t have to say it like that...”

Cashew, who was used to Gibel’s abrasive attitude, amusedly scratched his head.

“Hmpf.”

However, Gibell ignored Cashew, turned around, and headed for the exit. Then—

Tug, Gibel’s sleeve was pulled from behind.

“Wha... Y-, You...!?”

The one who pulled on his sleeve was Riel, who had approached him without him noticing.

No one felt her movement nor her presence, it was as if she had teleported right behind him. Everyone blinked their eyes blankly as if bewitched.

“...Here.”

In Riel’s hand was a feathered pen.

“You dropped this.”

“~~~~-!”

Gibel’s face flushed red with hostility as he swiped the pen from Riel’s hand. He then rushed out of the room with great strides.

“...?”

Riel’s hand remained outstretched as she stood still like a statue.

The remaining students had their mouths open wide in surprise.

“What’s with him recently?”

Sistina was half-confused, half irritated.

“Well, I suppose that he has been rather irritated ever since Riel joined our class...”

“Haha... Isn’t he just jealous of Riel-chan’s amazing alchemy skills?”

“D-, Don’t say that Cashew. You might unexpectedly turn out right. Gibel has always held absolute confidence in his alchemy... He’d even say that he won’t lose to Sistina.”

In the deserted hallway just outside the classroom—
Glen leaned against a wall with his arm crossed and lightly

sighed as he saw Gibel, who hadn't noticed his presence, run off.

"Well, can't really blame him. Not everyone can so readily accept someone as weird as Riel..."

Thanks to Lumia and Sistina, Riel's integration into the class has been going pretty smoothly, but there are people like Gibel as well.

Anyhow, it's because Riel's abilities exceed common sense. Even in the Imperial Court Magicians, her unmatched kill-count of heretics makes her the pride and ace of the special operations sect. Such power isn't something that can be easily hidden. Someone like Riel would naturally make many of the other students afraid.

Glen had been afraid of this, so he hadn't allowed his class to partake in magic battles... but if it ever came down to it, no one in his class would be able to win against Riel.

Furthermore, the one who would have crushed them in that instance would have been an irregular than was incapable of even using elementary magic. Surely, the difference between Riel and the rest had been made clear when she had smashed the golem into dust with the greatsword during the first lecture. Someone in their hearts, everyone should have understood that they were not Riel's equal in a true magic battle. As magicians it would be a blow to their pride, even more so for those as young as the students.

"Well... there's not much I can do but let it resolve itself in time I guess..."

Suddenly, Glen noticed Riel preparing to leave the classroom. Everyone must've been preparing to go home together. Glen scratched his head, and quickly left the hallway.

Problems like this did not solely exist due to the hidden discord in the class.

Of course, they existed in Riel as well.

This is a tale of a certain time.

“.....”

Riel carried a stack of books and papers in her hands as she walked down a hallway of the magic academy.

Hiding behind her in a corner of the hallway ten meters behind—

Riel... I know you can do it if you try... Sensei is proud of you...-!?

After tasking Riel with delivering some documents, Glen stealthily followed behind her to observe her progress. Although there was no real meaning in following her, Glen could feel the corner of his eyes heat up.

The passing students all sent dubious gazes towards Glen as he looked at Riel down the hall with a strange sense of warmth...

“Glen Ryders! I’ve heard it all! During your black magic lecture, you slandered the spell I improvised as ‘impractical and inefficient’ did you not—!?”

Harry suddenly approached Glen and threw a glove at him in anger.

“In my life you are the only one to disrespect to this extent and take me for such a damned fool! I can’t turn a blind on you any longer Glen Ryders! Let us settle this in combat!”

Glen’s face turned pale in anxiety and turn his neck as far as he could to face Harry.

“U-, Uhm.... Now’s... a bad time... Due to some very... special and complicated circumstances, challenging me to a duel may turn out very very badly for all of us... So uh... forgive me...?”

“Hmpf, you scared punk!? It’s too late to ask for my forgiveness! Hurry up and pick up the gloves! Allow me to witness what you call ‘practical magic’ would you!? And don’t worry, I’ll be sure to not accidentally take your life!”

“Ah—, No—, Uhhhhhhh—, oh, it’s not my life... but yours, senpai... It’s veeeeerry much like a candle in the wind I guess...Uhh... If you don’t hurry up and take back your challenge... Our very peaceful academy might be the stage for a gruesome tragedy or something like that—”

Glen tried his best to avoid in the imminent tragedy, but it was already too late.

“...Hm? Glen, is he... an enemy?”

“S-, She’s heee —!”

Riel suddenly appeared beside Glen, who immediately hugged his head in fright.

“Ha-, Ha-something senpai-!? Please run! Pretty pleaseeeeeeeeeeeee-!?”

“What are you here for, girl. Are you the rumored transfer student? Listen, I won’t take your attitude—”

As Harry entered his arrogant airs and began to scold Riel—
Pssht. The air was cut by the flash of a fiendish greatsword that quickly approached Harry.

The pressure behind the blow not only shattered the surrounding glass windows, but also left a fissure on the stone walls.

Fortunately, Glen had managed to kick Harry’s legs to upset his balance so that only his hair had been displaced. If he had been even a moment late, it would have been his head instead.

“W-, W-, What—!?”

After Harry, whose head now shined like polished glass, recovered from his fall, he looked up in terror at Riel, who carried the gigantic sword with a single hand.

Riel, as usual, carried a drowsy, emotionless expression as the aftershock of her swing collapsed the walls around her.

“KYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA—!? Despite Harry-sensei’s young age, he’s already encountered the great strife of balding. Now his hair is all gone—!”

“W-, What the!? The wall! What happened to the wall!? What the heck happened just now—!?”

The students in the hallway entered a panicked frenzy.

“Shut up! And keep my hair out of this while you’re at it! More importantly, y-, y-, you!? W-, What kind of magic did you use just now!? D-, don’t tell me that sword... No damned way!? Going by common sense, no sword could generate such force!”

“Common sense just doesn’t apply to her! Like I said already, just hurry and run!”

Ignoring Harry and Glen’s fright, Riel entered her specialty greatsword stance.

“It’s okay. I won’t run away... Just leave it to me Glen. I will... destroy your enemies.”

“Hey Riel, waaaiiiittttttt! Calm down pleaseeeee!”

“HIEEEEEEEEEEE!? S-, Save meeeeeeee—!”

“Let me go Glen. I can’t destroy him like this.”

“Shush you! Don’t go around making murder incident in the middle of school would you!? Aghh! Where is Lumia and the White Cat when you need them!? Come and help me out pleaseeeeeeeeeee!”

...Riel would more than occasionally do things like that, which were lacking in common sense or fine sensibilities. Thus, the days during which Glen could not relax would continue.

Yet, despite everything, if one were to ask whether those flurried days had a positive or negative influence on Riel, the answer was obvious...

Everything she saw and heard during this time were all full of fresh experiences.

During some fleeting moments, Glen would see an expression that he had never seen her have before... For him personally, these times were surely not as bad as he would have others believe.

Notes

- Cashew's part-time job description is closer to 'amaneunsis' - a literary or artistic assistant, in particular one who takes dictation or copies manuscripts. Credit to Frozen to finding the exact word.
- Glen uses 'boku' (reserved) for I when he talks to Harry at the end, instead of 'Ore' (confident).

Chapter 3: The Field Study Trip, Sets Off.

“What is the meaning of this...-! How is that any different from rejecting my membership...-!”

That day. The chief of the Imperial Platinum Magic research institute, Bacchus Braumon angrily struck his desk.

“Do you have any idea how many sacrifices I’ve made for the organization, woman!? Do you not know how much tribute I’ve given and continued to give!?”

Bacchus was around forty to fifty years old. Befitting of his age, his skin was wrinkled, his head was bald, and the remaining hairs on the corner of his lips and beard were a shade pale white. However, his eyes alone gleamed like a carnivore finding prey in the darkness.

“Even then, do you not accept my membership!? Do you not desire the power of my magicks!? Do you mean that my abilities and sacrifices are not enough to enter the Adeptus Order, or even the Portals Order!? Am I forever to remain a probationer and nothing more!? Answer me, Elenora-dono!?”
Bacchus wildly howled across the desk.

<TL Note: Read as ‘Adeptus’ and ‘Portals’, written as ‘Second Company <Earth’s Seat>’ and ‘First Company <Door>’>

“Please be calm, Bacchus-sama.”

However, his anger was brushed aside. Elenora, dressed in servant’s clothes with a headress and apron, eluded the question with a cheerful smile.

Elenora, the heretical magician from the Wisdom of the Heaven’s Research Society, was dressed in the same clothes as she had used during her time undercover in the imperial government. Since it continued to be her primary choice of

clothing, it seemed that she favored the clothes quite a bit.

“You believe that our great sage and the Heavens Order do not accept your induction... however, it is actually quite the opposite. With your abilities, surely you will jump beyond Portals Order and be assigned into the Adeptus Order— Furthermore, you will be assigned a high ranking within that order. It’s just that... we are unable to confirm whether your loyalty to the order is true, so our great sage has offered you a test.”

Elenora maintained her prim smile and continued.

“Yes... [Project: Revive Life]... When you complete this magic project once again, you will officially become a member of the Wisdom of the Heavens Research Society, one of us.”

“Like I said before, how is that any different from rejecting my membership-!”

It was evident that Bacchus was starting to burn with anger at Elenora’s attitude as he continued to shout.

“I, Bacchus Braumon, am the highest authority in platinum technique in the entirety of the magic empire Alzano! Do you think I do not know what [Project: Revive Life] is!?”

“No no, not at all.”

“That ritual magic is the ultimate forbidden art that was only able to succeed due to the extraordinarily talented alchemist Shion!”

“Oh? So I take it that you are implying that your abilities are worse than Shion’s?”

“Impossible! I am undoubtedly a genius! One that is surely beyond the likes of Shion! However... [Project: Revive Life] is a different story...”

Bacchus glared at Elenora whilst gritting his teeth.

“Like I previously said, [Project: Revive Life] was only able to succeed due to the alchemist Shion... Essentially, that

forbidden art is something nearing the realm of original magic. No, it would be better to say that it is Shion's original magic! So it would be impossible for anyone other than Shion to succeed in performing it! It is because you people did not realize that fact that you all neglected her! Even though the project was so close to succeeding, you all allowed it fall apart! So what do you mean that I must clean up after someone else's mess!?"

Having said all this in one go, Bacchus took deep burning breaths. His eyes were bloodshot and his rage showed no signs of receding.

"Your affirmation pains me, but that is certainly true. It would be correct to say that [Project: Revive Life] is akin to Shion's original magic given its level of sophistication as a ritual magic. Given that Shion has now passed away, it was impossible to complete the art... until now, that is."

"...What do you mean by that?"

Bacchus gazed at Elenora with doubt after hearing her cryptic words.

"A new prospect has risen. A prospect that would allow the project to complete."

"Hmpf, leave your dreams for when you sleep. What is it? Do you mean to bring back Shion using [Project: Revive Life]? Fuhaha-! Is that not putting the cart before the horse!?"

Elenora ignored Bacchus provocations and continued.

"...'Emotion Amplifier'"

"What...?"

"Soon, a group of students will be coming to this magic research institute on their 'Field Study', am I correct?"

"Yes, that pointless activity. What of it?"

"Amongst those students is an 'Emotion Amplifier'. If you use that student's power..."

As she was saying this, Bacchus spit in contempt.

“This exactly is why I hate brainless amateurs! Do you think I haven’t already tried that idea ages ago!? Listen! Emotion amplification is a supernatural ability that solely strengthens the magical techniques and magic power! It does not make magic that does not work in theory succeed! I bought an ‘Emotion Amplifier’ from the black market and done everything from hook them up to cut them up! This was my conclusion! It’s impossible!”

“Oh my, Bacchus-sama... you seem like such a serious and sincere person, who would have fought that you would dirty your hands with such inhumane and illegal prospects...? Fufu, how scary.”

“Hmpf! I don’t want to hear that from you, heretic. It fairly humane compared to what the likes of you do.”

Bacchus looked at Elenora with disdain as she chuckled to herself.

Normal people would be unable to understand their mad behavior, but they were fairly sane.

“However, that will not be a problem. The ‘Emotion Amplifier’ this time is rather ‘special’... Do take a look at this.”

“...This is?”

“You will understand once you take a look.”

Bacchus reluctantly opened the seal and spread open the document.

After scanning through the document his eyes open wide in astonishment.

“I-, Impossible—! T-, This is... H-, How could this be...-!?”

“Fufu, how is it?”

“Mmpf... H-, However, is this true...!?”

Bacchus complexion turned pale in shock. His rage moments

ago was the last of his worries.

“Do take a look at the emblem stamped at the bottom of the document.”

“The seal of the thaum... Could it be that this is personally penned by the great sage...!? If so, then what’s written here is...!?”

“True, no doubt.”

<TL note: Read as ‘thaum’, written as ‘twins’.>

Click. With a snap of Elenora’s fingers, the document in Bacchus hands was spontaneously set aflame, turning to ash in mere moments.

Bacchus did not appear particularly surprised. Rather, he appeared to be lost in thought.

“Our organization has taken a positive outlook regarding the matters concerning [Project: Revive Life], and I would like to also inform you that the Heavens Order has great expectations of you.”

“B-, But...”

“Do not worry. If you are concerned about the matter of capturing this ‘Emotion Amplifier’ I have already made some ‘arrangements’ in advance. Although there are there are some rats from the Imperial Court Magicians circling around this ‘Emotion Amplifier’, they will not be a problem. Although me to introduce your best collaborator to you.”

“...Collaborator?”

“Yes.”

Click. Elenora snapped her fingers.

The windows of the room opened, and in came a young man. The man wore a white robe and had blue hair that was rarely seen in the Alzano Empire.

“Glad to meet your acquaintance, Bacchus-san.”

The young man gave an elegant bow.

“Who are you?”

“Oh? Do you not remember who I am? I believe that if you know well of the matters regarding the extraordinary alchemist Shion, then surely you would know of me... Well, I suppose there are times where it can't be helped. My name is —”

“No, do wait... You seem familiar...”

Bacchus gazed at the young man as if he were looking at a ghost.

“I've looked at the documents that the organization circulated regarding Shion's [Project: Revive Life]. There were pictures in the documents detailing the magicians associated with it... Yes, if I remember correctly... No way, you are...-!? Uhm, you were the one who was working as Shion's partner...-! You're still alive...-!?”

The blue-haired man's lips curved into a cheery smile.

“I am but a second seat of the Adeptus Order, so I will of course do anything it takes to assist you, Bacchus-sama.”

“.....”

Bacchus fell silent.

He could admit it. The special 'Emotion Amplifier', Shion's partner, and the full assistance of the Wisdom of the Heaven's Research Society... The conditions that could not be achieved before were now all met. [Project: Revive Life] didn't seem quite as impossible.

“So what will you do? Will you accept? You desire to gain a seat within our organization... Yes? A new world governed and ruled by the chosen magicians... And the knowledge of the great skies – the Akashic Record”

“.....”

“Please come to a decision. All the glory and knowledge is

before your eyes, Bacchus-sama, and you have the qualifications and right to grasp it.”

In front of Bacchus, who remained silent—

Elenora, with a great smile on her face, gave a courteous bow.

...In a different place.

Alzano Imperial Magic Academy, classroom for year two, class two.

“Well, that’s how it is...”

Homeroom time after class.

Glen stood at the instructor’s podium with an annoyed expression.

“So we’re going to have a guidance session for the field study you guys will be attending soon... But what is this ‘Field Study’ anyway? No matter how I think about it, this is an ‘Outing Vacation’ where you go out and play with the class and stuff...”

“Could you please take this a little more seriously, sensei!?”

Sistina jumped out of her seat immediately in response to Glen’s unmotivated attitude.

“The ‘Field Study’ is neither playtime nor vacation! It is a mandatory seminar where we students visit magic research institutes operated by the Empire to learn about the operation, latest advancements in research, and—”

“Yeah yeah, so that’s how it is. Thank you very much for the explanation.”

Sistina immediately entered lecture mode to which Glen hanged and scratched his head, feeling as if the whole occasion was too tedious.

The goals of the Field Study were as Sistina said. Glen’s class

were second years, where it was a mandatory credit required to advance to the next grade. However, as Glen had attempted to point out, there was a lot of free time between lectures and tours of the facility, so it was hard to deny that there was a hidden element of leisure within this seminar. That being said, there was also the intent of forcing the students who generally holed up in the academy and Fejiti to widen their view of the world.

By the way, the 'Field Study' seminar was generally held in different times and places for each class. The lecture progress of the each class, the affairs and research of the magic research institutes, as well as the number of people at the institutes available to receive guests would all be taken into consideration. After all, they could not have all year two students intrude on the same facility at the same time.

"I'm sure the place we're headed to is busy, but they still put aside time to receive us. You're the leader of our class for this trip, so would you mind having a bit more self-awareness of your position—"

"Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah. I got it, I got it already...! Give me a break...!"

While Glen was busy being scolded by Sistina, the remaining students began to lively chat about their upcoming Field Study.

"Cecil, where are we going for our 'Field Study' again? Err, was it the Gold magic..."

"Hahaha, nope. We're going to the Platinum magic research institute."

"Oh right, that's it. Man, I'd rather go to the Military Magic research institute in Cantahre than there—"

"Well, it's not our choice Cashew. If I could choose myself, I would go to the Magic Engineering research institute in Itelia."

Although the academy had a census of the broad number of locations that the students of each class wanted to go, they couldn't fulfill everyone's desire. Whether or not they would go to the research institute they desired for the 'Field Study'... was mostly left to luck.

Regardless, it was unavoidable that there would be members of the class that would say 'I'd rather go here' or 'This is better'... When the class became engrossed in such discussions, it was then—

"Hmpf... Boys over there, you're too naïve if you're thinking like that." Glen called out after hearing the complaints and voices of dissatisfaction in parts of the class.

"You're thinking that 'My luck is bad'... 'I want to go somewhere else'... but let me tell you guys this – you guys are really lucky. I would even go as far as to say that you guys have undoubtedly been given the blessing of the goddess of luck herself...-!"

"Eh—...?"

"Think through this calmly. Where is the Platinum magic research institute located...?"

As the name suggested, the Platinum magic research institute was a facility that researched platinum magic.

Platinum magic was a compound technique that utilized white magic and alchemy that, in this case, was used to research the mysteries of life. In order to conduct this research, a large quantity of clean water was necessary.

<TL Note: Platinum magic (白金術) is combination of the kanji from white magic (白魔術) and alchemy (錬金術). Incidentally, Cashew's mistake earlier is 黄金 (gold).>

Thus, the Platinum magic research institute was established in a place where it would be easy to retrieve large quantities of clean water, Saineria Island...

"...Hah-! Isn't Saineria Island famous for their beach

resorts...-!?”

“C-, Could it be...!?”

Cecil showed a wry smile, while Cashew and many other males’ eyes shined with excitement.

“Fu... So you guys have finally noticed. During the Field Study we’ll have quite a lot of free time. While we’re still a bit away from prime season, thanks to the ley lines around the Island its warm all year round, so playing in the water is very feasible... On top of that, our class is filled with high-level beautiful ladies... Now, are you thinking what I’m thinking?”

““““S-, Sensei...-!”““““

“Say no more, just follow my lead.”

““““Yes, sensei!”““““

At this moment, a mysterious bond of empathy and friendship was forged between Glen and (a small portion of) the (male) students.

“Ugh, is our class filled with nothing but idiots...”

“Ahaha...”

“...?”

Sistina unamusedly sighed, while Lumia showed a wry smile. Riel, who sat behind the two of them, tilted her head in puzzlement.

After a short interim, the day of class two’s ‘Field Study’ finally arrived.

At a time where the sun had yet to fully rise, the morning fog afloat in the air, and the skies dimly lit, the class’ students, wearing their uniforms and carrying their luggage, gathered at the courtyard of the academy.

“Fu, it’s finally here... I can’t help but get excited!”

“Hmpf, you never change do you, Cashew? We’re not going there to play, understood?”

“Geez, and you’re a mood-killer as always, Gibel...”

“What kind of place is the Platinum magic research institute...?”

“I know they do magic research related to life systems... but can’t really say anything else until we get there.”

“Hey... I think I’m going to confess to the esteemed Wendy-sama during this trip...”

“Don’t do it, Alf. I’d says that she’s out of your league... Remember, the higher you climb, the harder you fall.”

Although it was still the wee hours of the morning, the students were full of passion and energy.

Unlike his students, Glen seemed to be in a daze. He did roll call in a rather impersonal manner.

“Everyone here? Everyone’s here right? Okay then let’s go.”

Under Glen’s lead, the students boarded their assigned carriages— several large stagecoaches used for travelling between cities – and set off from Fejiti.

The carriages exited from the west gate and proceeded down the highway leading southwest.

The carriages rumbled as they tread on the pavement. The students were soon greeted with a vast meadow with filled with gentle undulations. A carpet of yellowish fresh grass thickly covered the meadow all the way to the series of small hills, overgrowth, and lush woodland that created a horizon of its own.

The white balls of cotton that appeared on various points of the meadow were sheep whose wool coats had yet to be sheared. The round fluff balls gathered in groups and raggedly munched on the fresh grass. When a sheep strayed too far from the herd, the shepherd’s dog would bark it back

onto its path.

The early morning was still rather chilly, but it was accompanied by serene, fresh air and clear weather. The cotton-candy like clouds slowly drifted through the air. It gave one the feeling that the time too, was moving slowly.

The idyllic and peaceful scenery seemed to go on forever.

“Sometimes it’s nice to take it easy...”

Resting her body on the windowsill, Sistina looked out and took in the view.

Sistina rarely ever left Fejiti, so her chances to see such scenery were few and far between.

“Mhm... At the academy we’re always busy doing one thing after another, so this is a nice change of pace.”

Lumia sat with her hands clasped together on her lap, which gave an impression of refinement. She gaze at the scenery beyond the window with a gentle demeanor.

“Is it? I don’t really get it.”

Riel, who sat beside Lumia, drowsily murmured.

“Do you leave town often, Riel?”

“...Mm, all the time.”

Hearing an unexpected answer, Sistina reflexively continued.

“Oh? Why do you leave down? Could it be for trips?”

“No, to fight.”

Sistina immediately cursed herself for her thoughtlessness. Despite her age, Riel was a Court Magician. It was easy to predict Riel’s answer with just a little bit of thought.

“When I leave town... it is when I receive a mission or an order.”

Riel maintained her usual expression, so it was hard to read what she was feeling at the moment. Did she think that her

days as a soldier were bitter? What did she really think about that...? It was impossible to tell.

So Sistina didn't really know how to follow up on Riel's reply. She could only remain silent to avoid making the situation any worse...

"Ah! So is this your first time leaving town for something other than missions and orders?"

Lumia clapped her hands energetically.

"Probably."

"Then you should look forward to it Riel. I'm sure this time will be fun!"

Lumia's carefree smile and words seemed to evoke some response from Riel, whose eyes seemed to blink slightly faster...

"...Mm, okay." Riel curtly replied.

...As expected, I'm still lacking compared to Lumia.

Sistina gazed at the two with a strained smile.

Some students enjoyed the scenery. Others lively conversed with other students. There were also those who engrossed themselves in card games, and those who dozed off. The carriages steadily proceeded down the path. Stations were placed at set intervals across the road, where the carriages would come to a halt for a short break. Horses would be replaced and all those involved would take a brief rest, before continuing on their journey.

Eventually, the sun set and the night arrived. The carriages would continue to sway and shake as those inside entered a deep sleep—

Although the students slept, the carriages continued down their path—

Then in the afternoon of the next day, the carriages arrived at the port town of Seahawk, southwest of Fejiti.

The scent of the ocean drifted about the port town. The town served as a front entrance to the Yorkshire region of the Alzano Empire, and would often be teeming with ships coming in and out from various coastal cities and the surrounding islands. Furthermore, many of the ships from other coastal areas of the empire and foreign shipments would also enter the town. A vast majority of the goods and products to be distributed across the Southern Yorkshire would gather in this town, which led to it becoming an important economic hub for the empire.

After arriving at Seahawk, the students of class two temporarily split up at the carriage station. The students were free to form their groups and do their own activities for around one hour. At the end of this free period, they would gather at the harbor where they would board a scheduled ship heading towards Seineria.

Then—

“...He’s late!”

Before Sistina’s eyes was the vast, boundless sea and a large sailboat anchored to the harbor.

Sistina glanced with irritation at her mechanical pocket watch.

“Isn’t it already past the time we decided on! Where the heck did he go!?”

“Well, Sisti, it might be past the time, but it’s only five minutes... Not to mention, it’ll still be a while before the ship is scheduled to depart...”

“That’s not the problem! The problem is that he’s not showing up at the time we all agreed on!”

Lumia tried to calm Sistina down, but she wasn’t hearing any of it.

Taking a look around, it appeared that all the students had already arrived.

They had even performed roll-call autonomously; only Glen had yet to appear.

Once it was evident that he was nowhere near, Riel seemed to get restless.

“...I’ll go look for him.” Riel muttered.

As she prepared to walk away, Lumia caught her hand.

“Wait, Riel. The town isn’t exactly large, but you can’t go looking for him on your own. It’ll be more problematic if you happen to miss him when he comes back, so why don’t you just wait here with us?”

“But...”

A tinge of dissatisfaction appeared on her drowsy expression for a fleeting moment.

Since she arrived at the magic academy, the frequency at which she carried out a plan of action without thinking it through had decreased. However, if this continued on, it seemed as though she would run to go look for Glen nonetheless. If Riel was truly intent on it, there was probably nothing that Lumia and Sistina could do to stop her.

“Ah come on already! To start with, isn’t it common sense for any self respecting member of society to arrive ten minutes beforehand!? Do I really have to beat this into him...!?”

Feeling Riel’s growing impatience, Sistina couldn’t help but cry out...

“He~y ladies~? Do you have a moment~?” a frivolous called out from behind Sistina’s group.

The three turned around to look, and saw a young man putting up a snobbish pose.

The man’s long blueish-black hair was tied in a ponytail and extended behind his back. The man wore a pair of tinted

glasses and a top hat, and was dressed in a somewhat stylish frock coat. He also carried a cane in his hand that complemented his dandy ensemble. The man had the airs of wealthy nobleman who didn't know the definition of hard work. The insincere smile could be likened to that of a pick-up artist.

"Hey hey hey~ Did you hear me?"

As the man placed his hand on the perplexed Lumia's shoulder with overfamiliarity—

"...What do you want?"

Sistina quickly knocked aside the man's hand and put herself between the man and the other two, gazing at the man with displeasure.

"Oh my~ aren't you ladies cute~? Ah! Those uniforms are from Fejiti's magic academy right? Hey hey? So what are you ladies doing here~?"

Although the man's attitude was discomfiting, Sistina followed the proper etiquette and replied.

"We're here for our Field Study. We're waiting to board the scheduled ship for Seineria island."

"Oh~? Is that right~? So you ladies are waiting for the boat? Hmm~? What a coincidence~, I was just about to go to the island for business you see~? Ahaha, does this not feel like destiny~? What do you think?"

"...Not at all."

Despite her blunt reply, the man continued to push onward.

"My, isn't our meeting something like fate!? Don't you still have a while till you go? Why don't you have a chat with me? I can even treat you to something if you'd like?"

"I refuse."

"Ahaha, hey~ don't be so cold~. It'll just be a little moment of your time~"

Just quit it already. There's a limit to my patience. To start with, Sistina disliked people who treated girls in such a fashion. A part of her mentally prepared herself to blow away the man with magic while she prepared to shout at the man—

Then—

“Okay~, stop right there.”

Glen suddenly appeared and pulled the man by the collar of his coat.

“Geh!? W-, What’s your problem!? D-, Don’t get in my way! This is a private moment between me and the ladies...”

Ignoring the man’s protest, Glen exchanged a glance with Lumia and Sistina.

“Ah, sorry I’m late White Cat. You can lecture me when I get back or something.”

“S-, Sensei...”

“I just need to have a little ‘talk’ with this guy here. I’ll be back before the ship departs, so look after the class for me for a bit okay?”

After saying that, Glen began to slowly drag the man away by the collar.

“Gyaa—!?” H-, Hey don’t be violent! Ladies, save meeeee—!” The man pathetically scream as he and Glen disappeared into an alleyway.

“Hah... Just what’s wrong with him? I guess there are weird people no matter where you go...”

Unsure whether to be astounded by the man’s behavior or pathetic exit, Sistina released a long sigh.

However, noticing Lumia’s blank expression, Sistina called out to her.

“...What’s wrong, Lumia?”

“Mm, how should I say it...? I feel like I’ve seen him

before...?”

Then—

At a dim, somewhat humid deserted alleyway.

“W-, What are you planning on doing to me!? P-, Please stop! It’s not good to resort to violence! H-, hieeee-!? Please don’t hit me! Not even my father has hit me before!”

Glen sighed to himself and said to the man, who keeled over and trembled in fright.

“You don’t need to do that anymore okay? ...So, what brings you here, *Albert*?”

“.....”

With that, the man’s attitude fearful shivering and pathetic appearance disappeared without a trace. The man stretched out his back as if it were natural, cast away his top hat and glasses, and released his tied hair from its binds.

In doing so, the entire atmosphere of the alley seemed to change. Although the temperature hadn’t dropped, it felt as though it were several degrees lower.

The removal of the superficial tinted-glasses revealed a pair of hawk-like eyes with sharpness that seemed to gaze into the depths of the human heart. Those eyes now stared at Glen with a piercing gaze.

The man’s appearance was now unmistakably that of Glen’s former comrade in the Imperial Court Magicians, Special Operations Executor #17, ‘The Star’, Albert.

“...It’s been a while, Glen. The last time we met was when the royal guard was running amok during the Magic Games Festival, correct?”

Albert’s manner-of-speech was the same as ever, that of intense rejection of others – enough to feel a penetrating chill in his voice. Those who were not used to his voice would

probably feel unnerved.

However—

“...What is it?”

“Hm... you know...”

Glen placed a hand against his head and leaned against the wall of the alleyway.

“I know that if it was for the mission, you could act as anything from a well-mannered gentleman to a shallow playboy, or even a notorious delinquent if necessary... but after such a long time, seeing the gap between your act and your nature makes me feel a little dizzy...”

“Hmpf, you’re just weak. You need more mental training.”
Albert coldly declared.

Heck, why are you a battlemage anyway? Why not just go an act for a living...

Glen resisted the urge to say this and changed the topic.

“Ah, now I get it. Now that I know you’re here, I get why Riel of all people was chosen to be Lumia’s bodyguard... She’s just a decoy isn’t she?”

“Correct. By placing someone who is full of openings as a bodyguard, we hope that any possible assailants will become careless. The Princess’ true bodyguard is me. For your knowledge, this is a top-secret mission that only few know about in the military. I guard the distance from a fairly long distance and notice the enemy ahead of time. Then, I silently eliminate them. Furthermore, the operation carries the hope that the enemy will reveal further whereabouts. That said, I don’t think that the organization we are dealing with will fall for the ploy this easily.”

“If it’s any consolation, it’d probably be better if they didn’t do anything at all... On the other hand though, that means that there isn’t anything else that you guys can do for now...”

Even so, in terms of the distribution military strength, there were two ace-level battlemages from the special operations sect (albeit one incredibly unsuited to the task) on this mission. Were it for an average town-resident, one could easily say that this was incredibly overkill, after all, neither side had an infinite amount of assets.

“But knowing this is really comforting. It really really is. For a moment, I thought that the special operations sect was actually crazy and desperate enough to send Riel alone...”

Since that's the case, I can understand why they sent Riel here to be the bodyguard... But was there really no better way? Glen tiredly sighed, complaining internally.

“...So? Let's get to the real question. Why did you show yourself in front of me?”

“.....”

“From what you said, the core of your mission is ‘to have no one notice your presence’. Put it another way, you have to fool both your allies and your enemies completely. So why did you put that aside and approach me?”

When Glen asked, Albert briefly fell into a heavy silence...

“...Be careful of Riel.” He finally said.

“...What? Riel?” Glen responded with an amused expression.

“Oi oi, I've already taken that to heart you know? How much effort do you think I've put into keep her under control...”

“That's not what I mean. Riel... That girl is dangerous.”

Glen raised an eyebrow at Albert's lack of hesitation.

“...That's not funny man. Isn't Riel one of us?”

“Mhm, that's right. However, you and I alone should know the danger that Riel poses.”

“...-!”

Glen fell silent as Albert sharply pointed the issue out.

“...That’s already in the past isn’t it? Riel’s... just Riel now. The ace of the special operations sect that’s cut down a countless number of heretical magicians. She’s no one other than that.”

“Is that not just what you want to believe? Let me tell you this — Even now, I believe that Riel needs to be dealt with. She should be sealed off.”

“Oi... Stop right there. Even if it’s you, I won’t hold back if it comes down to it, okay?”

The air seemed to grow colder by the second after Glen’s threat.

Without out yield a single step, Glen and Albert stared intently into each other’s eyes.

“...Hmpf, as naïve as ever, Glen.”

After what seemed like an eternity, the first to fold was Albert. Of course, it was not because of Glen’s pressure, but rather, he judged that it would be unwise to waste any more time.

“I’ll leave this matter aside for now, but don’t forget my warning, Glen. I hope that you will not hesitate when the time finally comes.” Albert coldly said.

After saying his parting words, he gathered his glasses, top-hat, and frock coat off the floor, and put them on once again.

Looking at Glen, Albert quickly tied his hair back.

“Well then scary brother~! See ya!”

“...Mm, a sight for sore eyes as always. I have to say, I respect you for that more than I’m amazed.”

With a broad smile and flippant speech, Albert left the scene. Seeing that, Glen was overcome with dizziness again.

Class two boarded a liner headed southwest. The seven large

sails tied to the wooden masts were fully opened.

The scent of the ocean filled the ship that sailed under the clear blue skies.

The faraway marine horizon shined brilliantly, outlining the seemingly endless expanse of the ocean.

The warm and comforting winds blew gently against the hair and skin—

“Woah...”

Sistina, who had few experiences on ships, seemed to be overwhelmed by the magnificence of the ocean. She leaned with her body on the railing of the bow of the ship, holding her windswept hair down with her hands, and gazed at the grand view.

The ship cut through the raging waves and proceeded ever onward. Looking out towards the sea like this gave an odd sense of piety— however.

“UUgghbleeeehhh...!”

“...And it’s gone.”

Seeing the beautiful ocean scenery filled with white-crested waves be corrupted by puke, Sistina curled her hands into fists; her temples tremored.

“Hey, sensei! Stop ruining this moment! “

A short distance away from the bow, Glen lifelessly leaned his body across the railing like a garment on a washing line. He raised his voice to rebut the accusation.

“Shut up! It’s not like I can help it! Uuupuhh...”

The pale-faced Glen wore a hateful expression as he protested. However, he was soon forced to hold his mouth and lean out towards the ocean.

“W-, Will you be okay, Sensei?”

Lumia, who huddled next to Glen, worriedly rubbed his back.

“...To be honest, I don't think so... I wanna cry... Ugh, damn this stupid ship... this is why I hate them... Which idiot thought it was a good idea to make this anyway.....”

After emptying his stomach, Glen seemed to feel a little better. He limply reclined his back against the railing.

“Take this sensei. The crew gave it to me just now.”

“...An apple?”

“Yep, they said it would help with seasickness? Why don't you have a bit?”

“...Honestly, I don't have the appetite right now...”

Lumia tried her best to support Glen, who became a bit croaky.

Sistina sighed as she observed the two from a distance.

“That's an unexpected weakness... It doesn't really suit him... especially with that shameless personality of his.”

“Sistina.”

Having been called out to, Sistina turned to see Riel.

Riel appeared to be a bit irritated. She still didn't have any expression, but recently, Sistina found herself able to understand what Riel was feeling a bit better.

“...What's wrong with Glen? Does he... have a fever?”

“It's a bit different from that. What, are you worried about him?”

Riel nodded ever so slightly. Sistina was only able to see it because she was watching closely.

Seeing Riel like this, Sistina smiled to herself and said to comfort Riel.

“It's okay, Riel. He's just seasick.”

“... I see. I don't really get it... but it's the ship's fault?”

“Yep, well, I guess you can say that.”

“Okay... I got it.”

Having fully grasped the problem, Riel quickly turned around.

“I will sink this ship.”

“...Huh?”

Without stopping, Riel proceeded down a set of stairs headed towards the bilge of the ship...

“Wait— S-, Stop right there Riel!? Hey, someone go and stop her—!”

A large commotion erupted onboard the ship.

A few hours after departing from Seahawk, the ship finally arrived to Saineria Island.

“...So this is Saineria Island...”

Together with the students of the class, Sistina descended the ramp from the ship onto the pavement of the harbor which was made of tightly packed hewn stones. She looked mesmerizingly at her surroundings.

Strong coastal winds blew through the harbor. Sistina pressed one hand down on her windswept hair and another on her fluttering clothes as she looked up towards the skies. She listened to the gallant roars of the seas and the wails of the seagull above. The time was already dusk, and the sun that rested on the horizon dyed the earth in golden light.

Sistina turned her gaze towards the heart of the island.

The mountainous curvature of the island’s central area formed many complex ravines, all which were teeming with greenery.

The majority of the flora of the Empire’s mainland were coniferous, but the island’s vegetation was uniquely composed of broad-leaved vegetation instead. This small detail greatly amplified Sistina’s impression that she had

come to a faraway land that was far-detached from home, which flooded her heart with emotion.

She traced her vision to her sides. Starting at her feet, she gazed upon the seemingly endless white beach line that was filled with mellow twists and turns. Peering as far down the beach line as she could, Sistina spotted a small town that appeared to be littered with all sorts of somewhat stylish buildings that were most likely established for tourists.

It was then that—

“Take your time, sensei...”

“Agh—...Ugh—...”

Lumia and Riel supported Glen as he staggered down the ramp from the ship. The dissonance brought forth by his exceptionally groggy appearance once again crushed down on Sistina’s rekindled sensations and emotions.

“Gosh... I can’t you take joy in breaking the mood, or if you’re just lacking in delicacy...”

“S-, Shut it... White Cat... You don’t understand my suffering... euugh...”

Glen was looked rather pathetic, so the other students could only look on with forced smiles.

“To start with, we humans are creatures live as one with the land from our moment of birth! Human are children of the land! Without the almighty land, there is no human life! We are fated to dig our roots into the earth, live together as one, and eventually, return to the earth...! Is this not simply divine providence!? Is this not the cycle of life itself!? Yet why do we board these thin pile wooden sheets that we called ‘ships’ and drift away from land!? To depart for sea as a human, as a living being, is a mistake—!”

“...That’s awfully grandiose for something as simple as seasickness.”

To spout such sophism from nearly nothing was an impressive feat in itself.

“Sensei... If you’re this bad with ships, you should have just chosen a different location for our Field Study... For example, if you choose the Military Magic Research Institute in Itelia instead, then we would have rode a carriage for the entire trip.” Lumia said with a somewhat forced smile.

A month prior, they had conducted a survey in class to form a list of destinations for the Field Study seminar. After that, they conducted a final vote on the remaining candidates, where the class’ votes was found to be evenly divided between the Military Magic Research Institute and the Platinum Magic Research Institute. The deciding vote was thus left to Glen.

Glen replied to Lumia, who tilted her head in curiosity, with an unprecedentedly serious expression.

“Seeing beautiful girls in swimsuits takes priority over everything. Is that not a given?”

“Ooh...” the surrounding male students cried out with admiration.

Ignoring Lumia, whose smile seemed to strain, Sistina, who looked on amusedly, and Riel, who remained sleepy-eyed, Glen swept the robe that rested on his shoulders so that it floating behind his back and distantly gazed towards the setting sun on the burning horizon. His gaze seemed to harbor great affliction.

“Even if this were to be the frontline of a conflict between three nations... this would be the place I choose.”

Facing the horizon with a coat floating in the sea breeze, Glen looked pointlessly cool.

...It was, without a doubt, pointless.

“S-, sensei... you are a real man...”

“I will follow you to the ends of earth, Sensei...-!”

Glen’s appearance seemed to strike at the tear glands of a small portion of the (mostly male) students.

It was as if Glen had become a martyr for the creed in which he believed in. A portion of the students seemed to be overcome with emotion as passionate tears flowed down their cheeks.

“Ugh! Is this group is filled with nothing but idiots!? Also, haven’t the guys in our class become a bit weird since Sensei came!?”

Sistina could help but feel a smidgen of unease about the current state of her classmates.

“Come on Sensei! If you have the energy to spout such ridiculous things, let’s hurry up and head to our lodgings already!”

Sistina led the other classmates away at a brisk pace.

Their lodgings was a straight path along the shore, so there was no need to worry about getting lost.

“Oi oi, you’re going too fast. I practically have one foot in the grave right now, so would it hurt to cut me some slack...?”

With a sigh, Glen sluggishly followed...

Then—

Lumia approached Glen’s side and whispered to him.

“You chose this place because you didn’t want us to get involved in the Military’s magic right? ...Thank you for your consideration, Sensei.”

“.....Whatcha talkin’ about. I just wanted to see you guys in swimsuits, that’s all.”

After a moment’s silence, Glen turned his head away as if in abrupt peevishness.

“Well, that’s not really possible of me, but let’s say that this

was the one in million chance that *that* was the case. Isn't it egoistic of me to be pushing my ideas onto all of you? It's honestly nothing worth writing home about either way."

"Even so, it doesn't change the fact that you were thinking of us."

"...Like I said, that's not it."

Lumia gleefully chuckled.

"Alright, then I'll take you on your word."

"...Hmpf."

Glen snorted, his expression sullen and discontent. Lumia looked at him as if he were an evasive younger brother.

For the Field Study, the students were scheduled to stay at an inn located at a corner of the island's wharf.

The inn had been built using 'Waltoria Style' architecture, which had once been popular in the Empire's lengthy history. The inn was split into a main building and a single annex – neither of which failed to incorporate the pomp and splendor of the many country houses owned by local nobles of the island. At the same time, the olden architectural style brought upon a sense of nostalgia.

Unlike the new 'Sassan Style' that predominated Fejiti, characterized by its pointed rooftops, the 'Waltoria Style' was characterized through the use of constructs like arches, spires, and pillars. The magic academy was built using 'Waltoria Style' architecture.

Luxurious chandeliers hung from the ceiling of the inn's entrance hall. The railing of the oaken spiral staircase were exquisitely sculpted with flowers and fruits. The paintings that lined the hallways, the gold-wrought candle stands, the carpets beneath their feet...

Cashew restlessly walked to his assigned room, excited by

the glamorous interior design that was a breath of fresh air compared to the Magic Academy's buildings. The moment he stepped into his room, he vigorously threw himself onto the bed.

"Yahoo! Woah!? This bed is amazing! What the heck, how could it be this soft!? This is heaven compared to my bed in the place I rented on the student street back home!"

"Geez... quiet down would you? There's no need to get so excited."

"Ahaha, people will get angry if you're too loud, Cashew."

Gibel showed an astonished expression, whilst Cecil showed a forced smile.

The two were Cashew's roommates for their stay at this inn. The academy's students had been split into groups of three or four for rooming.

"Hey Gibel, what's on the schedule for today?" Cashew asked as he rolled on the bed.

"...Why don't you look it up yourself on the itinerary?"

Gibel replied with annoyance as he adjusted his glasses.

"Ah, I left it at home..."

"People like you..."

Gibel released a resigned sigh.

"There aren't any more plans. We'll eat at the reception hall, take a bath, and be done for the day."

"Oh?"

"There actually aren't any real plans for tomorrow either. Including the day of arrival, for the first three days, the scheduling is a lot looser to account for climate and other differences. Although the itinerary says that we'll be looking at the ecosystems and ley lines of the island, it might as well be free time."

“Oho?”

“In truth, the Field Study only really begins on the fourth day. The main feature of our trip here – visiting the research facility – is on that day. On the fifth day we’ll be having lecture and talks and on the sixth we have free time again. If you want to stroll around town or visit tourist sites, you can do it on the sixth day. After that, on the seventh, we’ll be going back the way we came from.”

That was the essentials of Field Study seminar for Glen’s class. Ten days give or take was rather short for a ‘Field Study’, as, depending on the distance from the facility, with travel time included, some Field Study seminars could take up to half a month.

“I see I see... I got it now.”

Saying that, Cashew showed an intrepid smile.

I heard that getting to the facility and back is a real pain in the neck, so we’ll need to go to sleep early to get enough rest... The same can be said for the lectures on the fifth day... But waiting to till the sixth day is a bit late... Essentially, we only have today to make our move...”

“‘Make our move’? What are you thinking, Cashew?”

The small-stature lady faced boy, Cecil, raised his head in puzzlement.

“Isn’t it obvious? We’re gonna sneak into the girl’s rooms at night and play around! It’s a tradition of every Magic Academy’s Field Study, is it not!?”

Cashew pumped his fists, whilst Gibel and Cecil tilted their heads in puzzlement.

“W-, Was there such a tradition...?”

“...Hmpf, up to your meaningless antics again I see.”

“‘Meaningless’? What about this is ‘meaningless’? Is this not a man’s romance!? Do you know how many costs I cut to

prepare the card games and board games for this very day!?”

“But what are you going to do if you get caught? I’m sure sensei isn’t that strict of a person, but you’d still be in trouble.”

“Fu... You worry too much, Cecil. Why does it matter if I get caught...? If so, then I would have already done what I wanted. I’d rather regret doing it, then regret having never done...”

Cashew seemed prepared to die for his ambitions.

“So, you guys with me?”

“Hmpf, you jest. I’d rather not be dragged down with your foolishness.”

“I-, I’ll pass as well... I have a bad feeling about this.”

“Tch, fine fine. It’s not like you guys were interested in this sort of thing anyway. Well, I’ll guess I’ll go see if Road or Kai are interested in coming along then...”

So, after the students gathered in the living hall for dinner, taken turns in the bath, and clock struck bedtime—

“Let’s begin the operation.”

Cashew announced in the thicket between the main building and the next.

“There exists a connecting corridor between the annex where we, men, live and the main building where the women are... However, we cannot tread this path. The risk of being sighted is far too high.

The seven male students behind Cashew, including Road and Kai, and nodded their heads in agreement.

“Thus, we are left with no other choice. We must circle around the back through the forestry and use the surrounding

trees to infiltrate through the windows. Rest assured however, as I've already surveyed the routes to get into each room beforehand."

"W-, When did you..."

"A-, Amazing, Cashew... This plan is flawless."

The others could not help but voice their respect and admiration for Cashew's handiwork.

"B-, But what about the possibility that Glen-sensei is patrolling the area...?"

"There no need to worry about either. One of the girls assisting me has probed out his movements. The chances of sensei patrolling this area in the next thirty minutes are practically zero."

"That's crazy... Y-, Your plans are too refined..."

"W-, We'll be in your care, boss."

"Hmpf, don't thank me yet. It's still too early..."

Cashew showed a wide smile.

"Thank me after we make it in and have the night of our dreams, alright?"

"T-, That's right... I'm... actually going to be up all night playing board games with Riel..."

"Hey what!? That's unfair Kai, let me join in!"

"Caesar, I'm gonna play cards with Lumia!"

"That's right Bicks. I'm gonna talk all night with Rin-chan about all sorts of things!"

"I want Wendy-sama to berate me saying 'You insolent fool!'... I want to become the slave in the king's game and do all sorts of things..."

"As for Sistina... Well actually nevermind. She'll probably just spend the whole night lecturing us or something."

““““Mhmmm.””””

“Now, let’s get a move on! Have you all steeled your hearts!? Eden is before us!”

““““Yeah!””””

With Cashew at the helm, the boys advanced with enthusiasm.

.....

...The plan was truly splendid.

Cashew had gone as far as to sacrifice his meal to survey a route. From the results, none of his sacrifices had been for naught.

To infiltrate through the rear through the forestry beyond what one would expect from mere students. The planning and pathing might make one think that he was a part of the Imperial Army’s covert operations group instead.

It was all for the sake of a single night. A night where they would chitter, chatter, and play games with cute girls. A night where their persistence would finally be rewarded with the full release of their youthful desires.

However—

“I-, Impossible...!”

En route to their destination, at a small circular open area in the midst of the forest—

“W-, Why are you here of all places, Glen-sensei!?”

As if to express that he had been waiting all along, Glen stood upright with his arms crossed in the middle of the area.

<TL Note: For the following line, note that the word for ‘Naïve’, 甘い, is the same word for ‘sweet’.>

“Naïve... Too naïve. You guys are as naïve as chocolate dipped in fresh cream and honey with a finish of powdered

sugar... I'd already seen through your shallow plans since the very beginning... After all—"

Glen showed a bold smile, lording over the students with an air of superiority.

"If I were you, I would have chosen this route, with this timing, to go meet the girls!"

"Why of course."

After Glen's declaration, Cashew released a sigh.

"Well, now that it's game over for you guys, scurry back to your rooms would you? These are the rules after all."

"....."

"W-, What's with the look? Don't worry I wouldn't report this to the academy for something so minor. I'll pretend I never saw anything. So—"

Glen turned his back towards the boys and waved a hand dismissively in the air.

"We can't do that, sensei..."

The burning determination felt behind Cashew's words gathered the gazes of those around him.

"There are times where men can't back off no matter what... To us, this is 'now'..."

"....."

Glen's expression turned serious.

"I see... So you guys have 'prepared' yourselves, huh?"

Tension filled the air.

"It's a shame, but as your instructor, you leave me no choice but to resort to force."

"Sensei—!"

Cashew cried out desperately towards Glen, who had curled his fists into a fighting stance.

“At heart, aren’t you one of us!? Of all the adults at school, you’re the one that understands us the most! You should know the reason why we strive to reach ‘Eden’! So why!? Why do you stop us!? Why must we fight each other—!?”

Cashew cries out from the depths of his soul, struck Glen’s heart.

“You idiots! Of course I understand... of course I understand how you all feel! To be completely honest, I want to be the one at the helm of the journey to the forbidden land! But you know—!”

Bam!

Glen struck the tree beside him with his fists as passionate tears trickled down his face.

“It’s already too late for me... I can’t return to your side... I am but an instructor, a slave of the institution... If the academy were to know that I allowed you to arrive at ‘Eden’... My already cut pay will reach the negatives and I’ll end up having to pay them instead...”

After scrubbing his tears, Glen released a soul wrenching cry.

“We humans do not devote our lives solely to bread! But! Without bread, there is no life!”

Glen’s angst echoed through the forest.

This time, it was the student’s hearts that were struck.

“You all understand don’t you? That the world is the lord’s garden... The garden called ‘Gehenna’...”

“It is because we tread on ‘Gehenna’... that we humans must strive towards ‘Eden’... You are saddened by this sensei... but even so, you will not allow us to pass...?”

“...Mhm.”

Hot tears of passions trailed down the faces of all those present.

Then—

As if a prelude to a deathmatch, the nighttime forest fell silent.

“I’ve understood this since the beginning, sensei... That you are a wall that we have no choice but to overcome...”

“If our positions were different... If we had been born in a different area... Perhaps I would instead be standing on your side, with ‘Eden’ in my sights... Though, none of that matters now.”

“.....”

“.....”

Tension continued to gather in the air...

Then—

“Let’s go, everyone! Follow after me! Together we can beat Glen-sensei!”

“Hmpf... Come at me, you shits! I’ll beat the fact that chanting speed isn’t absolute in a magic battle into you all!”

The boys spread out with Cashew at the center, whilst Glen began chanting a three-verse spell.



...Looking on from a distance.

“...Boys will be boys huh?”

A girl rested her cheek on the palm of her hand, which was propped up against the railing of the terrace of the roof of the main building,

It was Sistina. Having just exited the bath, hot air exuded from her skin under the negligee. She had originally come to cool off after her bath... but had sighted the ongoing charade upon looking out from the terrace.

“Did something happen, Sisti?”

“An idiot and a group of idiots are fighting over some pointless matter is all.”

Lumia, who had just come to the terrace, looked down towards the forest below and saw beams from [Shock·Bolt] flying about, accompanied by a variety of shouts and cries.

“W-, Why can’t we hit him!?”

“Damnit! Stop moving around...!”

“Fuhahaha! It doesn’t matter how fast you chant if you can’t hit me!”

Cashew and his group fired a relentless assault of one-verse spells.

However, as one might expected from a veteran battlemage, Glen weaved his way through the forest jumping, rolling, and immediately jumping again with the momentum – relying only on his physical abilities to dodge the spells with the smallest margins before firing back with his own.

Having been struck by the counterattack, one of the students cried out in agony before falling to the floor.

“A-, Alf—!? Hey, hang in there, Alfffffffff—!”

“C... Cashew... I-, I’m already done for...”

“You idiot! Your injuries are light aren’t they!? Aren’t we both aiming for ‘Eden’ together!? How could you allow yourself to fall in this place!? Get up!”

“P-, Please... Cashew... for ‘Eden’... for the ‘Eden’ that resides in all our hearts...! Step over my corpse... And see... my share of Eden... in my stead...”

“Alffffff-! Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh—! Just what—! Just what have I been fighting for all this timeeeeeeeeeeee—!?”

Cashew cried out as he held Alf’s powerless body in his arms...

“It’s not like he’ll die from [Shock·Bolt] or anything. He’ll probably come to in ten minutes at worst.”

Despite the passionate scene unfolding before her eyes, Sistina apathetically looked on.

“That aside... He’s really putting on a pointlessly good performance isn’t he? A magic battle is strongly skewed by a numbers advantage but he’s not having any trouble at all... Geez, why is he only serious at times like these...”

“Ahaha... It’s just like him to do that...”

Lumia forced a smile.

At the same time, Sistina noticed Riel stretching her body out on the terrace on her tiptoes, staring at the ongoing scuffle.

“Ah hey Riel? Uhm... Don’t jump in alright? Cashew and the boys are just er... How should I say this... They’re not really sensei’s enemies... they’re just sort of playing I guess...?”

Recalling the event where Riel nearly cut Harry in two, Sistina couldn’t help but feel nervous.

However, unexpectedly...

“...Mm, it’s fine. I won’t do anything.” Riel replied.

“I don’t feel anything bad from Cashew’s group.”

At the very least, it didn’t seem like anyone opposed to Glen

would be cut down regardless of who they were. It seems that she was just particular sensitive to ill intent, hostility, and the like.

Sistina reflexively release her tense nerves with a long breath, and looked down towards the forest once again.

“Hahaha! What’s wrong!? Is that all you guys g— Hey wait! Wait a second, isn’t it against the rules to charge me head on like— YEEOOOWWW—!? Ow that hurts! Ow!”

Geez, what are they doing.

As Sistina sighed—

“It’s the first time... I’ve seen Glen that happy.” Riel murmured.

“Huh? But isn’t he always like that at the academy?”

“He was a bit... darker back then.”

“...Riel?”

“That’s why I wanted to stay beside him and protect him... That’s what I had thought... but...”

Although Riel’s expressions were as absent as ever, Sistina felt that there were some feelings behind what Riel said, but she couldn’t quite decipher it.

Lumia, who was more sensitive to such minute changes in emotion, appeared to have no heard what Riel had said, and merely continued to watch over Glen and the group with a bright smile.

“Uhm... Riel?”

Although she couldn’t quite find the words, Sistina still wanted to say something to Riel, but it was then that—

“My my, you were here? I’ve been looking for the three of you for quite some time.”

The door to the terrace swung open and Wendy appeared.

“Ah, what’s the matter Wendy?”

Lumia peeled her eyes away from the charade and looked back towards Wendy.

“Mm, the girls were about to gather in my room and play some card games. I was wondering if you would like to join us.”

Then, Wendy turned to face Riel with a smile.”

“Uhm... Riel, what about you? Would you like to also come play with us?”

The awkward tension when the two conversed was no longer present.

“Cards? Play? ...Me?”

Riel’s drowsy eyes seem to glow with curiosity.

“Yes, of course.”

“...Mm, okay. I don’t really get it... but I’ll play.””

“Fufu, well then, would you like to come with me?”

Wendy gracefully turned around with Riel following suit.

“Isn’t this great...? Riel’s already become a full part of the class hasn’t she?”

“Eh?? Ah... Mm... So it seems...”

Sistina vaguely replied.

“Let’s get going to, Sisti.”

“...Mm”

Hmm... Just my imagination...? I must be thinking too much... It’s because she seems a bit too obedient... or something like that.

Sistina felt a little uneasy about Riel for a while now.

She couldn’t identify why she felt that way... but Sistina could only remind herself to not think too much about it.

Chapter 4: The Beginning and End of Fun Times

Some joked and played through the night to their heart's content. Some spent the night amidst a fierce battle. Some retired to bed early to prepare for the coming day... People spent the night of the Field Study in different ways.

Then—

The sun shined brilliantly in the endless blue skies, basking the white sands with blinding light.

The roars of the seas were accompanied with countless hues of waves which advanced and withdrew all along the coast.

On the beaches of Saineria Island were numerous boys and girls.

The students of Glen's class.

“Yaho, Sisti~”

Lumia, in her swimsuit, called out from amidst the waves.

She was dressed in a cute bikini decorated with ribbons and frills.

Water trickled down the elegant, captivating curves of her bodyline.

The breeze swept along the surface of the sea, carrying along droplets of water that refracted the shining rays of the sun. The colorful scene around Lumia, who waved her hand with an innocent smile, served to make her all the more eye-catching.

“The water feels great! Come here, Sisti, Riel!”

“Alright! I’m coming right now!”

Sistina arranged her belongings in a corner of the beach alongside the rest of the class, and removed the long towel that tightly covered her body.

In doing so, she revealed the modest curves that accompanied her slender figure.

She was dressed in a fashionable two-piece swimsuit consisting of a flower-patterned bikini top and pareo sarong bottom ensemble.

Her pure white, springy, healthy skin was revealed without reserve under the shining sun. Her porcelain skin made one feel faint—

Sistina, dressed in her swimsuit, energetically ran across the beach towards Lumia.

On the way, she stopped next to Riel, who sat at the beachline with her arms crossed around her knees, staring at the tide as it came and left. Sistina stretched a hand towards Riel.

Riel was also in a swimsuit, but unlike the glamorous swimsuit of the others, Riel's was without any affectation whatsoever. Her swimsuit was an uncouth one-piece dark blue swimsuit (the academy's swimsuit for water sports). However, when worn by someone whose curves were even less adventurous than those of Sistina, the modesty of it all was instead emphasized. Unlike Lumia and the others, Riel's appeal was that of purity and peace.

"Come on! Let's go swim, Riel!"

".....Mm"

After staring at the outstretched hand for a while... Riel timidly grabbed onto Sistina's hand.

Splish splash. The splashes of the waves looked like an array of white gems.

"Lumia, Riel, you've both remember to enchant yourselves

with [Tri·Resist] right?

“Of course... I wouldn't want to get sunburnt after all.”

“I haven't... It's troublesome.” Riel said plainly.

Sistina immediately turned to lecture Riel.

“You can't do that Riel! You shouldn't forgo it just because it's troublesome.”

“...There's no problem if I get sunburnt.”

“But then your pretty skin will be ruined wouldn't it? Even if you wanted to get tanned, if you don't treat it with medicines first you'll just be damaging your skin... Here, I'll do it so stay still okay?”

“...Mm.”

Then, from a short distance away from the three...

“The three of you over there, do you have any interest in playing beach volleyball with us?”

“Uhm... I'm sure it'll be more fun if we play together...”

Carrying a ball in her hands was Wendy, whose body was balanced and well-proportioned. Next to her was Rin, who, despite her small stature, seemed to be growing well overall — Of course, the two of them were also dressed in swimsuits —

“...Eh, ‘Eden’ was here all along...-!?”

Cashew, Road, Gai, and some of the other male students in the class gazed upon this scene, and could not stop the tears of joy that trickled from their eyes.

“‘As long as we stay calm, ‘Eden’ will eventually appear before our eyes, so retreat for today’... it was all as sensei said...”

“I'm sorry sensei... We were... We were mistaken all along...-!”

“Despite everything, we kept showering sensei with the pain

of our spells...-! We were blinded by what was before our eyes...-!"

"Thank you sensei... May you find peace in the other world... Please watch over us from now on..."

As the boys looked up into the blue skies, an illusion of Glen shot a refreshing smile back at them...

"Hey guys, I'm still alive."

Glen disgruntled voice called out to the boys who were absorbed in their own world.

Unlike the boys who were dressed in their swimsuits, Glen was dressed in his usual shirt, trousers, and tie, with a robe hanging off his shoulders. He laid limply on a sheet set up under a beach umbrella.

"Don't pretend that I'm dead. Rather, do you guys really hate me that much?"

"No, it was just... uh...a spur of the moment..."

"By the way sensei, are you not going to swim?"

"Idiots, even if I wanted to go swim body hurts too much for it... You know, my body still feels kinda numb in some places..."

Glen had lowered the output of his [Shock·Bolt] to knock the students out without leaving any lasting damage on the students bodies. However, the students rose to their feet countless times through sheer force of will and, as if they were prepared to die for it, and relentlessly struck Glen with their own unaltered spells throughout the night.

Had Glen used his original magic [The Fool's World], he could've easily wiped the floor with them without breaking a sweat, but he bore no desire to use a bloodstained assassination magic with which he had eliminated countless heretical magicians on simple students. His duel with Sistina in the past had also stemmed from this will.

“Geez, did you guys really have to go all out... Would it have killed you to hold back just a little...? It should’ve been non-lethal magic, but I honestly thought I was gonna die for a moment you know?”

“A-, Ahahaha... I’m sorry about everything...”

Glen spitefully emptied his can of complaints. The boys could not bring themselves to object whatsoever.

“Well whatever. Today is a rest day so the entire day is free time. Go and play around however you like. Hah... I’ll just sleep here... If anything happens... wake me up...”

“We got it! Sensei!”

The boys charged towards the roaring tides.

At the same time—

“Are you not going?”

Lying down, Glen turned his gaze towards the shade of a nearby palm tree.

“Of course. I didn’t come here to play around.”

Gibel rested his back against the base of the tree.

He ignored the other students playing about, and focused on the textbook in his hands. As if it was a matter of course, he wasn’t dressed a swimsuit, but rather his school uniform.

“Aren’t you a bit too uptight...? It wouldn’t hurt to let loose once in a while...”

“...Hmpf. Mind your own business.”

Gibel snorted out his nose and immersed himself in the textbook.

“Oh dear.”

Glen wasn’t bothered enough to say any more. He closed his eyes and prepared himself for a long slumber.

Then, at that moment—

“Sensei~”

Flip-Flap. Glen could feel someone approach.

“...Hm?”

Although he could tell who it was by voice alone, he opened one eye to confirm.

As expected, it was Lumia, who waved her hand as she clumsily ran across the sand... Behind her was Sistina, who pulled Riel by the arm. The usual trio.

“What’s up you guys? Oho? I have to say, you three are quite a sight for sore eyes...”

Glen showed a wicked sneer.

“C-, Could you not stare so much...”

Sistina hugged her arms around her body as if to hide it, a sullen expression on her face. Her cheeks were faintly red.

“Ahaha, sensei... How do you like this? Does my swimsuit suit me?”

Lumia, dressed in her frilly swimsuit, performed an innocent twirl in front of Glen.

“Mhm, it suits you crazy well. You look super cute.”

“Fufu, thank you sensei.”

Lumia smiled happily.

“And White Cat, your clothing sense isn’t all too bad either. I like it.”

“S-, Shut up! I-, It’s not like I bought it for you to see—”

At Glen’s random praise, Sistina’s mind appeared to have short circuited for a brief moment. She could only reply uneasily as her face flushed red.

The swimsuits which Lumia and Sistina had purchased for this day were at the forefront of trendy fashion in the Empire. Accompanied with their excellent looks, wherever they went

was like a gathering place for angels and fairies – eye catching and out of the ordinary.

Even Glen couldn't quite bring himself to employ his usual routine of sarcasm and jeering.

Then—

Riel, after taking a glance at Lumia and Sistina, walked up in front of Glen and stared at him.

“...Hm? What's up Riel?”

“.....”

Riel stuck her chest out a little and continued to stay silent. It seemed that she was expecting something...

“...Oi, how am I supposed to know what you want if you don't tell me?”

“.....It's nothing.”

Saying that, Riel dejectedly walked away.

It might've just been an illusion, but she appeared to be somewhat disappointed.

“...?”

Glen tilted his head in confusion at Riel's ambiguous actions. Then, he turned towards Sistina who puffed in anger, and Lumia forced a smile and tried to calm her down.

“By the way... what are you guys doing here? Weren't you playing with the others?”

“Ah, about that. We're were about to play beach volleyball and were wondering if you'd like to join us.”

“Beach Volleyball?”

Glen didn't seem very interested.

“Beach volleyball huh... Well, it's not like I dislike it, but you know... I'm kinda tired from dealing with the group of stooges last night... so I'm feeling a bit sleepy is all...”

“A-, Ahaha... thanks for the hard work sensei. Well, in that case, would you mind being the referee? I think I would be more enjoyable for everybody if we all participated... and I wanted to play with you too...”

Perhaps persuaded by the sweetness of his student, Glen scratched his head and lazily rose from the floor.

“Geez, it can’t be helped huh. If you’re going to go as far as to say that... I don’t really feel like it, but I can at least be the referee...”

Then—

At a makeshift volleyball court made in the sand.

“DOOOOOORYAAAAAAAAAAAAA—!”

Jumping high above the net with an explosive jump, Glen curved his body in an arc like a bow ready to be released. Then, he discharged all his power through his right hand, smashing the ball from the air.

The ball instantly spiked into the enemy field without mercy.

Although Road had jumped to block the ball, the ball was too high for him to reach.

Kai instinctively dove to save the ball, but he couldn’t make it in time.

“<Oh Invisible—”

Cecil pointed a finger towards the landing spot of the ball, and chanted the white magic spell [Psy·Telekensis] that allowed one to control material objects from a distance. However, the spell wasn’t completed in time either.

The ball smashed into the sand on the insides of the court.

“Game set! Sensei’s team wins!”

“—YEAH! How do you like that—!”

“Mm, sensei’s team is pretty strong...”

As Lumia announced his victory, Glen pumped his fist in celebration. Cecil showed a forced smile.

“...Didn’t he say that ‘I can at least be referee’? Isn’t he totally into it now...?”

Sistina looked scornfully at Glen, who displayed childlike vigor, and sighed to herself.

Glen had more sand and sweat on his body than anyone else.

“Fu! Nice assist, White Cat! Gibel! It’s our win!”

“Hmpf, of course. I’m the one supporting you after all. I might not be as fit as Cashew, but it’s not like I can’t do—” Gibel elatedly said while pushing his glasses up.

“—Wait, what am I even doing here!?”

Gibel, who had begun to play beach volleyball before he had even realized it, released a cry that resounded through the beach.

“Well well, it’s no big deal is it? We didn’t have enough people anyway.”

A team consisted of one attacker, one support, and one receiver. The positions of each member were rotated on a game-to-game basis. The receiver was allowed to use [Psy·Telekinesis] to stop an opponent’s spike... These were the rules for the magic academy style beach volleyball.

“Ku, we didn’t come here to play around! If we have time to do this, we should be—”

Gibel shouted as he angrily stormed off.

“Oh? You’re gonna run away?”

Glen taunted without restraint.

“Well, I suppose that’s understandable. The goddess of lotteries is up to no good after all, matching us up against the strongest team of the class. Can’t lose if you don’t play, am I ri—”

“S-, Shut up! That’s not it! Fine! Fine then! If you’re going to stay that then I’ll stay to the end! After all, whatever team I’m in will be the one to win!”

“Alright alright, you two... We don’t get many chances to play like this so don’t fight would you...”

Geez, they really are kids.

Sistina sighed as she intervened.

“But our next opponents are pretty strong...”

She glanced towards their future opponents.

The first was Riel, whose physical abilities were beyond human.

The second was Cashew, who, aside from Riel, was the most athletic in the class.

And the third was—

“Please be gentle with us alright?”

Teresa, the ‘Big Sister’ of the class. She clapped her hands with a smile.

She didn’t appear to be particularly athletic, but her ability with the psychic-type white magic such as [Psy·Telekinesis] was without rival in the class. She had had a spectacular performance during the Magic Games Festival, and beach volleyball was no different; as long as she was the receiver, no ball would fall on her field.

“Mmpf, they really are a strong team...”

Glen glanced at Teresa, who sent a beaming smile towards the opposite field.

Her great physical growth was evident in her bikini. Her alluring and voluptuous figure betrayed her age; no older than fifteen or sixteen. Whenever Teresa dashed or jump, her curves, that would perhaps make models feel a bit lacking, followed suit in a variety of ways, leaving her male opponents

momentarily dazed.

“Could that be— mental attack magic, or perhaps even time control magic—?”

“...What are you looking at?”

Glen’s expression made it seem as though he were in the midst of a deadly battlefield, like a battlemage desperately trying to figure out their opponent’s secrets or weaknesses. Sistina glanced scornfully at him, voicing her displeasure.

“...W-, What is it?”

Glen then turned his gaze towards Sistina and shamelessly examined her figure...

“...Hah~~”

He dropped his shoulders conspicuously and released a long sigh.

“Hey, what’s that supposed to mean—!?”

...After this and that, the match between Glen’s team and Teresa’s team began.

“Sensei!”

Sistina flexibly extended her body to set the ball in the air.

“HOORYA! DIEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE—!”

Glen burst into the air without a moment’s hesitation and spiked the ball towards the opponent’s field, albeit not in a fashion becoming of an adult.

However—

“<Oh Invisible Hand>-!”

Teresa pointed towards the ball and chanted the spell. The ball that was about to strike the sand abruptly flew into the air—

“Geh! She caught that!?”

“Riel-chan, go!”

Cashew calmly set the ball. As would be expected of someone of his level of athleticism, it was placed in prime position—

Not particularly motivated, Riel timed her jump—

“Ei”

Bwong! The dull sound of the ball distorting could be heard as she struck it.

Boompssh—! In the next moment, a large pillar of sand erupted on Glen’s side of the field.

Taking a closer look, it could be seen that half the ball was submerged into the sand.

“...Now what do we do?”

Glen’s expression curled.

In contrast to their cheery opponents, who had Riel as their core, Glen’s team was as solemn as a wake.

“...Damn! She’s hits the ball like she’s swatting a fly, but why is there so much force behind it...!?”

Gibel click his tongue in frustration. His usual composure was nowhere to be seen. Perhaps due to the scorching sun, the game became more and more heated as it proceeded.

“This really is too much... Our opponents are too much of a mismatch—”

Sistina said with a forced smile. She was ready to give up the match, but...

“Don’t joke around! I’m not going to admit defeat just like this!”

Sistina’s eyes widened in surprise to Gibel’s unexpected outburst.

“Sensei, I’ll do whatever it takes to catch the next shot, so quit screwing around! Your attempts at scoring have been

lackluster at best... With that performance, can you still consider yourself our teacher!?”

“Heh... Now that’s the spirit...”

Glen said with a sneer.

Magicians were generally passionate on matters regarding victory and defeat, and it seemed that Gibel was no exception.

The members of the class were certain who the winner of the match would be, but—

“The game’s just getting started.”

Glen dug the ball out from the sand and served.

...

“Give it to them, Riel-chan!”

“Ei.”

Riel fired a murderous spike.

The ball veered towards Glen’s side of the court like a cannonball.

“It’s coming, Gibel.”

“Ku— <Oh Invisible Hand>—!”

In response, Gibel drew upon all his magic power and chanted the spell.

Even if Riel didn’t pay attention to where she was hitting the ball, it was practically a given that her spike would easily smash through the opponent’s defense regardless of where it landed. However, based on Gibel’s observations, Riel had only been striking the smack center of Glen’s field. Knowing that, Gibel could devote all of his attention to that single spot and prepare his spell beforehand—

““““W-, Whattt—!?””””

Riel’s spike was successfully intercepted by Gibel’s spell. The

ball stopped moments behind hitting the sand and flew upwards—

This was the first time that Riel's attack was stopped, so Cashew's group was late to react—

"Sensei, it's all yours!"

In their opponent's brief moment of hesitation, Sistina quickly set the ball—

"Take this—!"

Glen leaped into the air and slammed the ball.

With a splash of sand, Glen's spike slammed into their opponent's court.

Oohs and Aahs could be heard from the spectating class as they rose their voices in astonishment.

"Nice shot, sensei!"

"You got that right!"

Glen and Sistina exchanged a high five. '*How do you like that*' Gibel's intent stare towards Riel seemed to say, his breaths ragged. Riel blinked blankly. It appeared that she hadn't once thought that her spikes would be stopped.

"You too, Gibel. Nice play."

Glen gave a thumbs up towards the instigator of the play.

"...Hmpf, to think that it would take this much effort to finally get a single point..."

Gibel said as he turned his head away and wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"Well, here comes the next one. Let's get ready."

In response to Gibel's attitude, Glen and Sistina showed strained smiles.

Then, Cashew served the ball, which arc toward's Glen's side of the court...

“Hah—Hah—Hah—”

...After the match.

Gibel crouched a short distance away from the court, his body drenched with sweat and covered in sand. As he hadn't changed into his swimsuit, his overall appearance was rather awful.

Unexpectedly however, Gibel didn't seem bothered in the least.

Another match had begun, and the class' attention were glued to it.

Away from the rustle and bustle, Gibel quietly caught his breath...

“...?”

Feeling a presence, Gibel turned his head upwards.

His eyes met with Riel.

“...What do you want?” he asked bluntly.

“You were good. It was a nice play—” Riel murmured.

Her expression was the same as ever as she offered Gibel a cup of refreshments.

Gibel silently gazed at the cup.

If this had been yesterday, then he would have slapped the cup out of her hand without a second thought.

Although the eccentric transfer student reeked of amateurism, her ability as a magician towered far above his own. In his eyes, she was an enemy. From the moment he witnessed her high-speed synthesis, he recognized that his abilities could not even compare to hers. He was frustrated. He could not bring himself to accept it.

But well... perhaps I had let the heat of the moment affect my judgment.

Bearing that thought in mind, Gibel meekly accepted the cup and grumbled.

“Hmpf... I won’t lose to you... You may have won this time, but one of these day...”

“...Mm, I see.”

A breeze swept through the beach, leaving a soothing sensation on the skin that had been exposed to the warm sunlight.

That day, the class played to their heart’s’ content.

After leaving the coast, the group visited the tourist district.

Then, when sunset approached, everyone noisily gathered together by the beach for a barbecue.

The fun times flew by like an arrow.

Then—

“Now then...”

Late at night, past bedtime for most; the sky dark.

Most of the students, having played throughout the day, had already retired for the night.

“Ugh well... I just want to go out and relax for a little bit... No one will mind.”

Glen ventured towards the tourist district, murmuring to no one in particular.

The streets were illuminated by oil-fueled lamps and were no dimmer than it had been during the evening. Although not much compared to the gas lamps that were the craze amongst the technologically savvy members of the upper class, the luminance provided by the oil-fueled lamps was already quite substantial.

The shaking yet dazzling lights of the countless orange flames casted shadows intermittently throughout the street, which mimicked the shaking of its source. The earthen walls of the architecture and the roadside trees exuded an exotic ambiance.

Although incomparable to the tides of people earlier in the day, the people who had come to enjoy the nightlife continued the festive mood of the tourist district. If it was already this boisterous during the off-season, it was hard to imagine what it would be like during the prime time.

The streets were packed with open-cafes and bars, each of which were filled with tables and customers. Every customer had drinks and food at hand, talking away the night with those whom they were acquainted, as well as those they had just met.

Amongst the many public enterprises were individually-run food stalls which had settled themselves in the spaces between the storefronts. As modest as it seemed, it did not lose to the enterprises in the slightest. It offered fried potato, various skewers, smoked sausage, freshly made seafood soup, shrimp fritter, hot wine and many other inexpensive delicacies which made people instinctively reach out their hands, selling incessantly to anyone passing by.

The booming business was not limited to just restaurants. Some stores exotic-looking clothes, others sold strange accessories and wooden carvings. There were also some slightly dubious street vendors that set up stalls beneath eaves that drew customers with vigor and spirit; speaking and selling to potential customers who stopped to view their rare goods.

Glen bore no interest towards the bustle of the streets, heading straight towards the outskirts of town.

Eventually, the pavement beneath his feet had become the white sands of the coast.

There was not a soul around, only the beating of the waves and the scent of the sea.

The waves surged and receded without end. The bubbles that formed on the wet white sands that glowed pale blue under the night sky were like pearls being washed ashore.

The sea and horizon were tinted dark blue. The crescent moon shined silvery white in the night sky.

The intervals of the waves that refracted the beams of moonlight glistened like diamonds. The perfect scenery for an eventful day.

“...Hah—Man... I’m really fried...”

Glen sat down beneath an adjacent tree and opened the cap of the palm-sized bottle of brandy that he had bought at a stall on the way here; downing his evening drink little by little. What lay before him would be the pairing for his drink, and he was perhaps starting to feel a little drunk from the sights. He would sleep with peace of mind — That was the reason for his outing tonight.

Although Glen was not type to enjoy sightseeing as a pastime, but he felt that it would have been a loss of a lifetime had he not viewed the scenery that now laid before his eyes...

He continued to take short sips from his drink.

As if valuing what was left of his drink and of the moment, Glen drank enough at a time to moisten his lips whilst reflecting on the events of the trip thus far; his gaze never leaving the scenery.

Then after what seemed like an inordinate amount of time—
“...Hm?”

He noticed the presence of others.

Even an absolute homebody like himself had gone out of his way to come here. It wouldn’t be strange for others to also be

here.

However, the problem was—

“Come on Sisti, hurry up!”

“Hey Lumia... I’m um... not too sure about this...”

The distant voices were somewhat familiar.

“It’ll be fine as long as we head back soon. That aside, let’s hurry towards the sea. I’m sure it’ll be beautiful.”

“We’ve already had all day to look at the sea haven’t we? ... Ah, geez, you really are mmpf~!”

All was as he had suspected.

The figures that appeared on the beach were Lumia and Sistina. Also...

“...What are we doing here?”

Riel followed closely behind the two like a baby bird.

“Fufu, I wanted us to see the nighttime sea. The moon is really clear today, so I was sure that it would be super beautiful.”

“...I see. I don’t get it though.”

The three hadn’t noticed Glen, who was concealed in the shadow of the tree where he sat.

Then—

“Uwah...”

“...Ah.”

Standing on the waterfront, Lumia and Sistina were overwhelmed by the grandeur, seemingly fantastical sight of the nighttime scenery.

“It’s so pretty...”

“...Mhm... I would’ve never imagined that the sea on a moonlit night would be this pretty...”

The gentle tidal breeze shook the girl's hair and the hem of their clothes.

"Hey Sisti, it's a good thing we came, isn't it?"

"...Um, t-, that's, well... You're not wrong... but this and that are different, Lumia! To sneak out of our rooms to come to the sea is just a little..."

Lumia warmly smiled towards Sistina, who seemed slightly disturbed.

"Ahaha, in the end didn't you come with me anyways? Be honest, you really did want to come didn't you?"

"...U, gu."

It seems that Lumia had hit the bullseye. Sistina couldn't muster any reply.

Having not even tried to stop Lumia and following her all the way here meant that she too was guilty.

"Alright, I'll admit it. Hah... Well, we've already broke the rules and come all the way here, it'd be a shame to not enjoy it..."

"Mhm, that's right."

"Geez... For as long as I've known you, you've always been more mischievous than your looks suggest..."

"Fufu, sorry about that Sisti."

Lumia playfully smiled.

"But still, it really is beautiful no matter how long I look. I wish Wendy and Rin would be here to see it..."

"Well, it couldn't be helped I suppose, those two seemed to be really sleepy anyway..."

Then, the two resumed to have their hearts captured by the view.

Finally—

The two seemed to remember that Riel, who hadn't said anything until now, was here with them.

"...Riel?"

Feeling uneasy, Lumia turned around to whether or not she was still there.

Those worries were quickly eased, as she saw Riel standing there, her expression the same as ever.

"...How do you like it? Bored... or perhaps not?"

"....."

Lumia asked nervously, but she didn't receive a reply. She merely stayed silent.

Lumia began to feel uneasy again at Riel's cold-shoulder, but then—

"...Not... at all." Riel murmured.

Riel voiced an unexpected reply.

"...Eh? Riel..."

"This is... the first time I've seen something like this... What is this feeling...? I don't, really get it..." She said, seemingly lost.

She looked for the words to voice her feelings.

Desperately, word by word, she spun her sentence.

"...I don't get tired... of looking."

Lumia took a closer look at Riel's expression, which was illuminated by the moonlight. She found that Riel's usually half-closed, drowsy eyes were opened wide and clear, her gaze focused with great intensity on the boundless nighttime sea.

Seeing Riel's expression, Lumia finally let her tensions loose. With an affectionate smile, she then said.

"I think I'm very blessed to have met you Riel."

"...Blessed? To have met me? ...Why?"

Riel gaze seemed to shake in slight disbelief.

"Mm, I don't really know why either, but it's not something that can be explained with logic I guess..."

Although somewhat anxious, Lumia's smile never wavered.

"I'm very happy to have you as my friend."

"...Friend...?"

Riel seemed to go rigid, having been caught off guard.

"Yup. That's right. Ah, of course Sisti is as well."

"Hey, Lumia... Did you really just mention me offhandedly like that?"

"Ahaha, sorry."

Lumia stuck out her tongue a little, whilst Sistina sighed lightly in disbelief.

Riel casted sidelong glances towards the two.

"...Friends... I don't really get it."

She paused for a brief moment.

"...But I don't dislike it."

She murmured, her expression as placid as ever. Her gaze returned to the sea.

Lumia smiled brightened at Riel's bluntness.

Then, with some idea in mind, she began to remove her shoes and socks.

"...Lumia? What are you..."

Ignoring Sistina's question, Lumia paced into the sea.

"Wait, I said wait Lumia! What are you doing!?"

Only when her slender feet already submerged in the sea did she turn around to face Sistina, her arms drifting in a large

arc with her movement.

The golden tendrils of her hair and the hem of her clothes floated lightly in the wind.

With her back towards the starry sky, the girl smiled innocently as she stood in the sea whose surface reflected the moon.

It was a scene so full of sanctity and mystique that it seemed hard to intrude upon—

“Fufu, the water feels great...”

“H-, Hey Lumia! Come back! Your clothes are getting wet aren’t they!?”

“It’s okay Sisti, I brought a change of clothes anyway.”

“T-, That’s not the problem...”

How do I convince her? In Sistina’s moment of hesitation—

A spray of shining silvery water flew through the air.

“...Kyaa!?”

Sistina let out a cry as water rained down upon her.

Through the cold sensation, Sistina immediately realized that it was seawater.

“Ahaha-!”

Lumia had splashed the water by her feet at Sistina.

The culprit looked at Sistina with a mischievous smile.

“N-, Now you’ve done it! I hope you’re ready for this!”

Annoyed, Sistina kicked off her shoes and flung her socks aside.

Then, after some hesitation at the water’s edge, she stepped into the water as if casting away her doubts—

“Take this!”

“Kyaa-!”

Sistina began to splash water at Lumia. More so than angry, her expression seemed happy and lively.

“...?”

Riel, having witnessed the interaction between the two, looked on in puzzlement.

Noticing that, Lumia called out to her.

“Come on Riel, come play with us?”

“...Play? I don’t really get it... but I just need to splash the water?”

“Yup!”

“...Mm, okay.”

Then, Riel, without any hesitation or constraint, stepped into sea with her shoes and socks still on.

She wildly kicked water in Lumia and Sistina’s direction.

Riel’s utilized the raw strength that allowed her to swing a greatsword like a twig – unimaginable from her slender limbs – and let forth a surge of water.

“Kyaaaabububu-!?”

Water flowed down Sistina’s head, as if a bucket of water had been poured directly on top of her.

“K-, Kuuuuuu.... Y-, You...!”

In just a brief moment, Sistina had become soaked from head to toe, much more so than Lumia. Sistina’s shoulders and fists trembled vigorously...

“....?”



[\[1\]](#)

“Ahahaha-!”

Riel stared blankly at Sistina, whilst Lumia curled and held her stomach in her arms, unable to hold back her laughter.

...After that, the girls immersed themselves in their little game of water splashing.

Happy laughs.

Angry cries.

The occasional yelp or scream.

The incessant sounds of splashing water.

It was like the playtime of pups and kittens, boisterous yet inviting a smile. Such was the spectacle of the playing girls.

The shining beads of water jumped through the air.

As if they were dancing amidst the waves...

“...Geez, what a hopeless bunch.”

Glen had his back against the tree, his legs stretch across the floor where he sat. He gazed absentmindedly at the scenery.

Suddenly, he raised his hands with both thumbs and index fingers in a ‘v’ shape, and but his hands together in front of his eyes so that they formed a rectangular window.

On the other side of the window was the three girls playing.

“...A perfect composition”

His lips slackened and he moved both hands behind his head, and leaned his head back to face the sky.

His gaze was met with a dark expanse illuminated by the stars that shined like silver.

“...I wish I brought my camera now...”[\[2\]](#)

A camera was a device would burn the image seen through a

set of lens onto a board covered with a special silver reagent. Using light-control magic and a few tricks, even a dark scene like this could be captured.

Well, I can't really capture this scene well with how much those girls are moving around, and it's not like I had the space or energy to spare to carry around that bulky box.

But even so, I want to capture this moment in some physical form and treasure it well.

—Those were his honest thoughts that had been evoked by the scene.

“...Alrighty then.”

I do kinda feel guilty about about peeping... But well, each and every day of this trip will be hard work after more hard work, so I guess it's okay to consider this a side benefit of the job.

Having selfishly arrived at such a conclusion, he picked up the brandy bottle he had set aside and began to take short sips from it once again.

...This really is a little odd. I couldn't even be bothered to remember the name of this cheap ass brandy, but in this moment it goes down as smoothly as quality wine.

So—

Until the drenched girls finally had their fill of playing around

—

Glen, with minor drunkenness, decided that he would continue to watch the scene.

...

.....

.....

...

“...Hm?”

Glen came to his senses, waking up to the sound of waves rolling in and out. .

He quickly inspected his surroundings, his mind groggy from sleep.

There was no sign of anyone else at the shore. His back was against the tree.

“...Ah, I ended up falling asleep...”

Unlike the empire’s mainland, which was constantly under the cooling effects atmospheric winds that flowed from the eternally snowy mountain range to the northeast, Saineria Island had warm air currents in its immediate vicinity as well as ley lines that passed through the island itself, so it was quite warm even in the nighttime. The warmth had perhaps been too comfortable, and he had fallen into a deep sleep.

“Oh dear, what’s the matter with me today...”

He could only admit that he had been too careless. It had only been a small amount, but the alcohol had definitely taken its toll.

If he had done such a thing in Fejiti, his body would be shivering uncontrollably from the cold.

“Oh shit, it’s already this late? Ugh... Can I even get into the inn at this time? I’d rather not sleep outside...”

After confirming the time on his pocket watch, Glen hurriedly stood up and paced with hurried steps.

It already felt past midnight.

The boisterous streets earlier were now dead silent.

The shining lights were now sparse and dim.

The only sounds that could be heard were those of insects.

Glen fervently rushed down the path leading to the inn.

However—

Noticing someone on the path, Glen came to a halt.

Glen focused his gaze on the figure in front

They weren't hiding their presence, nor did they seem to have any hostile intent, so they didn't appear to be dangerous, but... it was unnatural for someone to be here at this time of the night. Although such an evaluation seemed rather hypocritical, Glen tried his best to play dumb.

Glen remained cautious as the figure approached.

Finally, the figure that emerged from the darkness was...

"...Riel?"

It was Riel, her expression drowsy and no different than usual.

"What are you doing here?"

Riel stopped several steps from Glen and said.

"You weren't in your room so I was looking for you."

"No... My room is in an the other annex isn't it? How did you..."

"I snuck in. Infiltration is my forte."

Liar. You're not good at infiltration, you're good at breaking in, assault, and stuff like that.

As much as he wanted to say that, Glen instead inquired calmly.

"...My room was locked right? If you don't get a reply, won't you normally think that I was sleeping? How did you confirm that I wasn't in my room?"

"...Mhm, it was locked. That's why I cut the door apart."

"Hah... I see."

There goes my wages again.

Glen held back his tears, and pretended to be calm as he walked past Riel.

Riel, like a duckling following its mother, followed closely

behind.

“What about Lumia and Sistina?”

“They’re sleeping.”

“Geez, didn’t I tell you to always stick with Lumia? You’re a bodyguard remember?”

“I know... but I wanted to meet Glen.”

Riel’s murmurs were as inexpressive as ever and the same could be said about her drowsy faced expression. No charm or interest could be derived from her voice.

However, Glen could only sigh to himself. Even if it was Riel, he couldn’t bring himself to get angry after hearing that.

Normally, this was an extremely concerning situation, as she had sidelined her task as a bodyguard to go do something else. Leaving her protectee was something she should never ever do.

However, now that he knew that there was a true bodyguard – Albert – he didn’t have to treat this mishap quite as seriously. Even now, Albert was definitely hiding somewhere on the island, protecting Lumia from afar.

Everything will be fine as long as he’s here. That was how comforting Albert’s presence was.

Well, there’s shouldn’t be any problems as long as we head back quickly.

“Let’s get going.”

“...Mm.”

The two began walking back.

Under the silver light of the brilliant moon in the starry skies, the two’s shadows followed one after another.

“...Hey Riel.”

He himself thought that this was a tasteless question.

But still, he turned his head and shoulders towards Riel, and

looking over his shoulder, he asked.

“Having fun?”

“...?”

Riel tilted her head slightly in confusion.

“Sorry. Let me fix that a little. Lumia, Sistina, the rest of the class... Are you having fun being with them, playing with them?”

Riel walked silently for several steps, before murmuring.

“... I don’t, really get it.”

Her expression was unfazed. There was no color to her expression, it remained transparent, emotionless... But there was a hint of anxiety, confusion...

“Do you feel anything when you’re with them? Does anything come to mind when you’re together?”

“I don’t know what expectations you have for me, but...”

As if choosing her words carefully, searching for her thoughts and feelings, she fell silent once again.

“...Just a little... I want to be with those two... with everyone, just a little longer... That’s what I think.”

Hearing that, Glen’s lips curled into a smile.

“I’m sure that’s what it feels like to have fun. Hold it close alright?”

“...I don’t really get it.”

Well, it’s too soon for her to understand it, her mind is even more childlike than her looks after all. She might look like a baby-faced fifteen year old give or take... but for various reasons her mental age isn’t quite there.

However, if she can come to understand the complexities of the human heart little by little...

Then perhaps even Riel, whose head is barely afloat above the dark side of the magic realm, might be saved. Maybe she can lead a brighter, more upstanding life.

That's why.

“Hey Riel... Now that you have the chance... Would you like to leave the Imperial Court Magicians and start anew?” [3]
Glen suddenly suggested.

“Well, it might a messy process, but Serika and I will do something about it. For example, you could enroll in the magic academy as a genuine student instead of a bodyguard. That way, you can be with Lumia, Sistina... You can be with them for however long you want.”

“.....”

Riel's expression appeared to be shaken just a little bit...

“You don't need to involve yourself in such a bloodied, strife-ful realm any longer. I'm sure your brother wouldn't... *that person* wouldn't... wish for that either.”

“*That guy*...? Who do you mean?”

“No, sorry. Just a slip of the tongue, don't mind it.”

“...I see.”

Uninterested, Riel didn't inquire about it further.

“Anyway, the reason why you're an Imperial Court Magician is because you defected from that organization and then went with the flow right? You have no duty or obligation to be battlemage any longer. Isn't it about time to rid yourself of that and lead a normal life as a student? I'm sure those two would be happy as well.”

Hearing that, Riel's steps came to a halt.

Noticing that, Glen stopped and turned around towards Riel.

Then—

“I... can't do that.”

Riel quietly murmured. Her expression was the same as always – sleepy, expressionless.

“...B-, But why?” Glen returned, a hint of disappointment in

his voice.

“I... have to keep on fighting... for you.”

“Riel...?”

“Yes... I’ve decided... that I would live for you ...”

Usually, such a saying would be a honeyed phrase. *For you.* There was no man who wouldn’t be happy hearing that, even it had been from a young girl like Riel.

However, Riel was...

Hearing this from Riel at this moment left an overpowering sense of off-putting dissonance.

I have to keep fighting for you. I would live for you.

Glen could only attribute this feeling to ‘danger’.

“For me... but I’ve already...”

Quit the Imperial Court Magicians.

As if shoving these words down his throat, Riel continued with a strong heft behind her words that was unbecoming of her.

“That’s why Glen, come back. If you’re not here... I... what do I have to live for...? What do I have to fight for...? I don’t know...”

Riel turned her gaze away... her voice extinguishing with each passing word.

Her expression was no different, but her figure gave the impression of a duckling that had lost its mother.

“One year ago... I left the Imperial Court Magicians without saying a word to you or Albert. I apologize for that. There are no excuses for what I did, after all, I selfishly decided to abandon my comrades who were fighting with their lives on the line and ran... I’m the worst kind of human trash.”

With an expression filled with bitterness and distress, Glen blandly continued.

"I have no right to say this and I have no right to criticize you for wanting me to come back. However, this is something I have to say. You... don't want us to fight side by side again, and of course you don't have any special affection for me, you just..."

Then, he abruptly stopped, hesitating to continue...

"You just want to use me as a replacement for your deceased brother."

Gathering his resolve, Glen finally let these words loose.

Riel's shoulders jumped for an instant.

"When you were still involved in that organization... you fought to protect your brother, didn't you? But in the end, you failed. That's why 'this time' you will succeed... with me in place of your brother. This doesn't serve your will or wishes, only your obsession with your past, your delusions and habits."

"....."

"To start with, you said that to protect me, you want to be involved in a world that's filled with danger...? Such a thought is fundamentally wrong. Aren't you putting the cart before the horse?"

"....."

"So it's time to stop your twisted way of living. I don't know how many times I've said this, but your brother won't wish for that. I'm sure that your brother *and*... No, your brother... wished for you to lead a life full of happiness."

"....."

"It's probably not too late to step away. There's no need for you to keep living in a world involving that sort of magic. If you can lead a upstanding life with those guys then... So..."

However—

"...I don't get it."

Riel...

"I don't get it... I don't get it."

Her shoulder trembling, her fists tightly clenched...

"...I don't get it... I don't get it at all, Glen!"

Riel was agitated like never before.

Shit. By the time Glen could clench his teeth, it was already too late.

What he said to Riel just now... must've triggered something within Riel.

"I don't understand anything about what you're saying, Glen! Why not!? Why can't you!? What's wrong with me wanting to fight to protect you!? Why... why aren't you willing to be with me!? Why Glen!? If you aren't here... I... I—!"



Her expressionless face twisted in rage, grief, and insecurity, her thoughts and feelings flooded out of her mind towards Glen—

Glen, while surprised... felt a deep sense of regret.

...It goes this deep? Her hearts and mind were already this twisted...?

In the year Glen had not been there to replace her brother, Riel's had likely been undergoing inner turmoil. The gloom that had built up over all this time within was now explosively surging forth in the form of unadulterated words.

...I was... too naïve.

The feelings Riel bore towards Glen were not of faith nor goodwill.

They were a fixation of her own existence and an over dependence of others.

However, those feelings mustn't be viewed as a weakness to be ridiculed, for if they weren't in place then Riel, who had naught but the memories of her time where that organization had taken anything and everything from her, would be unable to affirm her own existence.

So now.

Glen was at a standstill, not knowing what to say to Riel in her current state—

“...Could it be, that it's *them*? It's *their* fault?”

Riel—

“Lumia, Sistina... is it because of them...? Are they why you can't come back...? It's because of the academy... that Glen can't...?”

Her thoughts veered in the worst direction—

“Did they... take Glen from me?”

“Wait! How did you get to that conclusion!?”

Glen, unable to ignore what Riel had said, hurriedly cried out. The good intentions behind his earlier suggestion had now flipped on its head. He couldn't help but lose his bearings, as unsightly as it was.

However, it was all too late.

"Shut up shut up shut up-!"

Riel vigorously shook his head, rejecting Glen's words.

"I... I hate them... I hate them all!"

Screaming that, Riel ran away with frightening speed.

"Wait, Riel!"

Glen stretch his hand out towards her, but her figure soon disappeared from sight.

She had not run in the direction of town. It seemed that she had no intention of returning to the lodgings tonight.

"Riel..."

Glen stood there in a daze, his hand outstretched, unable to give chase.

Riel really is... a lot like myself, when I lost my goal to be a magician of justice, when I could only face magic with nothing but despair. We both relied on one thing to keep us afloat. In her case those... the problem goes a lot deeper.

"...A magician of justice, huh."

The fairy tale hero that used magic to punish the evil demon king and bringing happiness to all the people. The most powerful magician that existed in the tale 'The Magician of Melgarius.'

He had once wished to be that kind of 'magician'... To be like the 'magician' in the fairy tale who brought salvation to all and would never allow sadness nor strife. Looking up to such a grand figure, he vigorously studied magic, believing that he would become like that one day. Then he became an Imperial

Court Magician...

However, what Glen found there was the bloodied and woeful 'reality' of magic... No matter how hard he worked, no matter how desperately he outstretched his arm, there were those he could not grasp, there were those he could not save... Such was boundlessly cruel, yet natural 'truth'.

There was no 'Magician of Justice'.

"It never goes as planned... huh..." He murmured quietly.

Glen's shoulders dropped as he released a long sigh.

Notes

[1] Illustration really doesn't make sense, considering the actual scene, but it's where it is in the book, so...

[2] Japan uses a separate term and it is clearer that the type of camera Glen is referring to is a Victorian style, box-shaped camera. More specifically a Dagguerotype Camera. English refers to both as just 'camera'. The same term is featured in volume 2 when the portrait in Lumia's locket is mentioned.

[3] Glen's choice of wording strongly says to 'clean herself' of the Imperial Court Magicians, but it doesn't translate well.

Chapter 5: Riel

The next day; the day where the class tour of the research facility finally arrived.

After a light breakfast, Glen's class set off departed from their lodgings. The class moved in a loose trail as they headed towards the Platinum magic research institute located in the center of Saineria Island.

Although the coastal area in the northeast, where the sightseeing district was, underwent a fair amount of development and expansion, most of the island was still an expanse of untouched vegetation and woodland. There were still areas of the island that had yet to be seen.

The full extent of the ecosystem in the unexplored areas had yet to be grasped as well. Whenever a Magic Academies or Imperial Universities sent teams to perform scheduled surveys, they would almost discover new species of flora, fauna, and magic-beasts.

Aside from the northeastern coastal area and the several zones assigned for use in outdoor activities, the island's grounds were restricted to ordinary members of the public.

The destination for this time's 'Field Study' was the Platinum magic research institute, located at the center of such an island.

Glen and the group continued down the stone footpath connecting the coast and the central area. The path which cut a line through the dense woodland was surrounded on both sides by luxuriant primeval overgrowth. The tree branches that were easily an arm's length above their heads created vast amounts of shade, causing the path below to be decorated with lights of various shapes and sizes.

Although there was a stone path, the quality of it was worlds

apart from the pavements of the delicately crafted streets of Fejiti. The natural undulations of the earth were left unattended and the stones were disorderly and misaligned. Never before had they walked atop a path more difficult to traverse. There were portions of the path where no stones had been laid and there were also sections that could only be considered a 'footpath' in name alone.

Aside from Glen, who had a long military career, and a few of the students that came from the rural countryside, the students, who generally came from metropolises, were all running on fumes.

"Hah—, Hah—, uugh..."

"Huu... Huu..."

"Hey Rin, you okay? I've still got energy to spare so I can carry your stuff if you don't mind."

"...T-, Thanks Cashew... As expected from someone who wants to be an adventurer in the future..."

"Haha, it's just cause I'm a country bumpkin."

"Keeh... Why... does a noble like me... have to do this...-! Call for a carriage...-! I need...-!"

"Hmpf... That's... quite the sloven look... you got there, isn't it... Wendy? Perhaps... this was too much... for a spoiled lady... like you?"

"How ironic... to hear that from you... What of your usual... sharpness... Gibel?"

Lumia's group was no different.

"Hah—...Hah—...Hah—..."

Lumia wiped her sweat with ragged breaths, but even so, she continued to walk forward with all the strength she could muster. Sistina called out to her with concern.

"...Are you okay, Lumia?"

"I'm... not feeling... too great... What about you?"

"I'm doing alright, it's tough... but I can push through one way or another... I guess..."

In accordance to her words, Sistina's movements displayed her considerable fatigue, but her heft of her breaths were lighter compared to the rest of the class.

"You're strong, Sisti... I'm pretty worn out..."

"It's a bit odd... You and I shouldn't have much of a difference in terms of stamina... Maybe the *thing* I was doing day after day is having an effect...?"

"...? What *thing*?"

"Eh? Ah, no no! It's nothing really!"

Lumia tilted her head in puzzlement in response to Sistina's frantic head shaking and denial.

"W-, Well, the stronger one here... is by far her."

Avoiding the topic, Sistina turned her head behind her.

Her gaze met with Riel, who followed closely behind Sistina.

Riel's expression was unfazed. Whilst the members of the class showed differing extents of fatigue, hers was still drowsy and uninterested. Her breaths were calm and there was not a single drop of sweat to be seen. The sense of tranquility exuded by her made it seem as though she wasn't breathing at all.

"...She really is an Imperial Court Magician... A soldier..."

Sistina whispered so that only Lumia could hear her voice of admiration.

"It's good that she's safe..."

When the topic shifted to Riel, Lumia remembered the events that transpired this morning.

"When we woke up, Riel was gone..."

“Despite everyone causing a mess we still couldn’t find her, but then she suddenly showed up a few moments before we were about to leave.”

Recalling the events, Sistina let out a sigh, and turned back towards Riel and said.

“Don’t do something like that again okay Riel? If you keep this up you’ll become like Glen-sensei in the future.”

“.....”

Riel replied to Sistina’s warnings with silence... It was then—
“-!?”

The messy paving had a part where it seemed to crumble. Riel, despite having happened to step on it, didn’t fall over, but she still crumpled onto one knee. It was a rare faltering from someone of Riel’s physical prowess.

“Riel!?”

Pressing her fatigue aside, Lumia rushed to Riel’s side.

“...Are you okay? The footing is pretty bad here, so let’s be careful alright?”

Worried, Lumia stretched a hand towards Riel to help her up...

Smack.

Riel smacked Lumia’s hand aside.

“...Eh?”

Lumia was bewildered, unable to understand why Riel had acted this way.

“...Don’t touch me.” Riel said with hostility behind her voice. Riel stood up and brushed past Lumia and Sistina, who were still frozen in place from shock.

“...Stop right there, Riel.”

Unable to overlook Riel’s actions, Sistina stretched a hand out

and caught Riel by the arm.

"I don't know what's happened, but wasn't that a bit rude? She was just worried about you..."

However—

"Shut up."

"Eh?"

"Shut up I said shut up!"

Towards Riel's sudden shouts, the entire class stopped in their tracks and turned their eyes towards her.

None had thought that the soft-spoken Riel would raise her voice in such hostility and fervor.

Everyone's face displayed their disbelief.

"Just leave me alone! Leave me alone already! It's so annoying!"

"...-!?"

"I— I hate you, I hate you all!"

After shouting and screaming like a child, Riel flung aside Sistina's arm and ran away with her backs towards the two, her shoulders seething with fury and irritation.

Overcome with shock, Lumia and Sistina were at a loss for words.

"...W-, What was that...?"

"The three of them...were getting along quite well yesterday weren't they...?"

"I thought Riel had opened up to them, but considering what happened just now..."

"...What do you suppose happened between them?"

The students quietly conversed amongst themselves with the occasional uneasy glance towards Lumia.

"...-! What the heck was that!? Riel, what is that supposed to

mean—”

With the blood getting to her head, Sistina dashed after Riel with the intent to protest...

“!”

Her arm was caught by Lumia.

“Lumia?”

Turning back, she found Lumia shaking her head in sorrow.

“I don’t know what’s happened... but let’s leave her alone for now okay?”

“...If you say so.”

Although she couldn’t just lay down and accept the situation as it was, Sistina took long breaths in an attempt to calm her mind.

“But what was up with her? Her attitude took a 180 compared to yesterday... I don’t understand it at all.”

“...Sisti” Lumia said, her expression colored in grief and anguish.

“Do you think that maybe she really does hate me...”

“!”

“Riel... lives in a different world from us... but I decided to lead her on anyway... Maybe she was forcing herself to stick with us all along...? Was I meddling too much..?” Lumia said with great sorrow.

“Not at all.” Came a sudden, yet blunt reply.

Lumia and Sistina, caught off guard, quickly turned their heads towards the source.

There they saw Glen, who stayed at the back of the group in case anything happened. Since the entire group had come to a halt due to the earlier incident, he had now caught up.

“Sensei...”

“Honestly, I have to thank you two for sticking with that miscreant girl for this long; zero societal skills, cooperativeness, or common sense and all... Thanks a lot really.”

“But...I only...”

“Though, at the same time, I have to apologize. Actually, yesterday night, I said something unnecessary to Riel and she got really angry because of it... so she’s a little unstable now... Sorry.”

“‘Sorry’...? So you’re the reason that Riel’s like this!?”

Then, with a flash, Sistina raised an eyebrow.

“Let me guess, you’re also the reason behind her being missing this morning aren’t you!? Just what kind of tactless things did you this time!?”

Connecting all the dots, Sistina rained down on Glen.

However...

“.....”

“H-, Huh...?”

Glen, unlike his usual childish self, didn’t try to twist his faults with sophism nor did he try to make any excuses, he meekly and apologetically accepted Sistina’s judgment in silence. Seeing Glen’s downcast expression that could be likened to a scolded boy, Sistina couldn’t muster her anger.

“...You know, she’s really just a kid.”

Glen softly said.

“She’s not all that different from you in terms of appearance... but spiritually and mentally she’s really just a little kid. She was made to be like this because of her special upbringing...”

“Upbringing... By that you mean...?”

Before Sistina could finish inquiring—

“It would be better if we didn’t know, isn’t it?” Lumia judged.

“Thanks for that. I’d rather not lie to you guys, especially since you get along with her.”

Hmpf. Although Sistina wanted to pry further into Riel’s past, hearing Lumia and Glen’s exchange made her think better of it.

“...Hm? What’s up White Cat?”

“N-, Nothing at all!”

“...? Alright then, so that’s what it is. This might be a bit much to ask... but uhm... I hope you guys can look over what just happened and remain friendly with her...”

“It’s okay.” Lumia said with a smile, as if to ease Glen’s worries.

“We got along all this time, so her rejection came as a bit of a surprise to us. I won’t hate her over something like this.”

“We’ll be fine sensei. More importantly, shouldn’t you go make it up to her? Honestly, whenever you try something you always seem to bring the trouble to us... Ugh.”

Sistina puffed a cheek and turned her head the other way. Although her words didn’t free Glen of responsibility, her clumsy display of concern was much appreciated.

They’re good girls aren’t they, though... one could stand to be a little less cheeky.

It might be self-serving for me to still think this, but rather than swing her sword and magic in such a bloody and dark world, it’d be better for her to live out her life in a brighter place with these two. That’s all I want for her.

Although he hadn’t a clue as to how to carry it out, that was what he truly thought.

From then, two hours passed.

Treading through the steep snaking path next to a cliff,

crossing over a valley on a suspension bridge, pacing through a ravine which flowed with clear, chilly water... the group finally arrived at the Platinum magic research institute.

“...Christ, why did they build this research institute in such a remote place...”

Even Glen cursed under the weight of fatigue as he looked up at the entrance of the facility.

To the rear of the structure was a steep cliff that neighbored a stunning waterfall. To its sides were the dense virgin forests that covered much of the island. The building's immediate surroundings made the facility seem more like a temple instead. The floor of the plaza in front of the facility's main entrance was defined by square tiles, which were spaced at regular intervals regardless of direction. Aquatic vegetation lived in the gaps between each tile, through which pure, clear water flowed without pause.

The faint sounds of trickling water and the light mist from the waterfall's vapors that floated near their feet reflected the dazzling rays of the sun, decorating the hall in with the vivid spectrum of the rainbow. It wouldn't be strange for the picturesque scenery to be a tourist landmark.

“Really, with how unworldly this seems, I feel like I came for an archaeological survey rather than a field trip...” Glen blurted out upon seeing the exquisite view.

“Hah... Hah... No more...”

“I'm fried from all that already...”

His students were exhausted to say the least. Some opted to sit down, while others removed their shoes dipped their feet in the flowing water.

Riel stood a short distance away from the group, doing nothing in particular.

“Erm, one, two, three... Everyone's here right? No one got left behind or anything?”

Glen took attendance again just to make sure, it was then—
“Welcome, visitors from Alzano Imperial Magic Academy. It must’ve been a long journey for you all.”

A robed man appeared before the group.

The man was about forty to fifty years old, on the hem of what could be considered elderly. The top of his head was bald, and a fair amount of his remaining hair and facial hairs were some shade of white. However, he had the demeanor of a friendly old-man and had an oddly approachable presence.

“My name is Bacchus Braumon. I serve as the chief of the Platinum magic research institute.”

“Oh, so you’re Bacchus-san.”

Glen wiped the sweat from his forehead and straighten his posture to face Bacchus.

“I’m Glen Ryders, in charge of Alzano Imperial Magic Academy’s year two class two. Allow me to express my gratitude for taking time out of your day to host my class’ ‘Field Study’. For a research-focused magician like yourself, Bacchus-san, it must be somewhat irritating to have a bunch of chicks running around the facility. Well, there’s no changing that, so I do ask for your continued patience and understanding in the following two days.”

“No, there’s no need to worry about that.”

Although Glen’s casual tone left something to be desired, Bacchus received him in a cheerful fashion.

“Those that are here are the eggs that will uphold the future of the Empire. If this experience can nourish their bodies and minds, then there is nothing that I would want more.”

“Haha, you’re quite a man of character aren’t you? If I were you I’d have called this off cause I’d think it’d be too troublesome.”

Glen shrugged his shoulders with a forced smile.

“Well then, let up go shall we? Glen-san, could you have the students follow my lead? I shall show them the institute’s facilities.”

“Hah? Wait... Are you saying that you’ll personally act as the guide for the field study?”

Glen gazed at Bacchus with surprise.

“No, how could we ask that much of you... I’m sure you’re quite busy with your research... Wouldn’t it be better for one of your employees to handle this...”

“It’s fine. To be frank, it is quite depressing to bury my head in magic research and research alone. Socializing with youngsters once in a while is good for the mind and body. Given my authority in this institute, the group can also visit areas that would otherwise be restricted as well. I would like to give the youngsters which uphold the Empire’s future the greatest experience possible at my institute with the hopes that they can absorb as much knowledge as they can.”



“...Re...Really!? I would’ve never thought that you would go so far for a mere group like ours... I can’t find the words to express my gratitude. Thank you very much, truly.”

Even Glen couldn’t help but feel thankful for Bacchus’ sincerity.

As for Sistina, who had watched the scene unfold in close proximity, rushed to talk to Lumia with restless glee and excitement.

“Hey hey Lumia, did you hear that? It seems like our ‘Field Study’ is going to be amazing! We’re so lucky to be able to see the latest in magic research, don’t you think!? You know, even if its labeled the latest, usually all we get to actually see is stuff from one or two generations of research ago!”

However, Lumia remained silent, an uneasy expression on her face.

“...Lumia? What’s up? Did something happen?”

“...Eh? No, nothing’s happened really. Nothing at all. I was just a bit surprised at how well the reception is. Bacchus-san is a really great person.”

“That’s right. Amongst pure-research magicians, there aren’t many with such modest and forthcoming personalities you know?”

Mhm, that’s right. Maybe I’m just overthinking this... Lumia convinced herself.

Lumia had heard of Bacchus’ name in essays and theses regarding magic, but was not at all acquainted with him. This was the first time she’d ever met him.

That’s why—

The ice-cold gaze that Bacchus had for a brief moment when he was conversing with Glen... I must’ve just been imagining it.

I can’t make Sisti worry about such a baseless, irrational fear when she’s

looking forward to this tour either.

Lumia convinced herself that it must've been a figment of her imagination and worked to forget the incident.

Under Bacchus' lead, Glen and the students examined the operations of the Platinum magic research institute.

Based on their experiences, it would be appropriate to call the place 'the temple of water'.

Regardless of whether it was a room or passageway, waterways stretched throughout the entire facility. The clear flowing water filled the building with the scent of clean vapors. Despite the facility being indoors, trees and shrubbery were allowed to grow without restraint; the vitality that filled each room could be felt on the surface of their skin. There were luminous moss amongst the flora that lived indoors as well. Despite there being no lamps or windows, the interior of the building still managed to maintain strangely lit. At fixed intervals, they would come across monoliths that shined with black luster. On the surface of these monolith were some glyphs. They were too complicated to read, but it was likely that they were used to maintain the environment and ecosystem within the building.

"Platinum magic... is a composite technique derived from white magic and alchemy^[1]. The main topic which this field concerns is, as you should all know, life. Thus, our research usually requires that the area be filled with the mana that is derived from fresh life and organisms. That is why the condition of the building is as you can see. Despite the troubles, it is quite charming is it not?"

With that, Bacchus led the class through various research rooms.

In a room grew a variety of medicinal herbs with a range of effects. The research taking place was focused towards

cultivating better medicinal herbs through selective breeding. In a room, boulders and crystals were piled on top of a magic circle, with the hopes of developing mineral life forms.

In a room, large amount of plants and animal were crammed into a giant glass cylinder, where the biological makeup of the organisms were studied.

In a room, several plants and animals were combined together conduct research on chimera creation.

In a room, there were several magic computing units used to gather and analyze the genetic and soul information of humans and animals.

...Working in each and every room were likely the leading researchers of the magician elite, who didn't look away for a moment as they immersed themselves in their research.

"...Wow, amazing."

"Mhm... Yeah."

"This is... quite incredible."

Due to the unique environment and facilities required, for the students, this research was in an entirely different realm. Coming into contact with this research that they would scantily see, let alone touch, the students were all overwhelmed.

"...This is really something else. I'd have never thought that people would be able to do this much..."

Of course Sistina was no exception. Moments earlier, she had watching intently as a research era spell to precisely operate a pipe organ-like magic apparatus to control organisms at the cellular level. Next to the apparatus was a towering slab made of magic crystal which projected the results of the cellular shift using light magic.

Sistina eyes clung to the projection and spoke to Lumia.

"I did say I want major in magic archaeology... but seeing

this... gives me second thoughts really... What about you, Lumia?"

"Well, erm... I'm planning to become a magic bureaucrat and not a researcher."

Then, Lumia said in a voice that could only be heard by Slistina.

"Also... Seeing makes me feel a little... scared honestly."

"...Scared?"

"Uhm... like... should we really be tampering with the lives of living organisms however we see fit...?"

Hearing Lumia's honest thoughts, Slistina reflexively gulped.

The rest of the students probably recognized this as well...

Surely, this was a question they would all like to avoid.

It was also true that not everything they saw at this facility was all beautiful or mysterious.

They could certainly accept creatures being brought to life, but when they had been brought to a homunculus specimen that had no choice but to live out its life in a glass cylinder, they all felt a sense of indescribable dread and guilt. There were also grotesque lifeforms that they had instinctively looked away from. Surely, those biological specimens came as a result of some failure to recreate life. Although frozen at the current time, there had also seen a large number of military-use chimeras that were likely created solely as murder machines. The summary, chronology, and results of such research were displayed in the showroom.

Tampering with life was against her virtues. It was a blasphemous act; prideful, arrogant. It was only natural for Lumia to feel scared about such research.

Yet, despite that, the mysteries of life had been a pervasive, omnipresent theme of magic. If they even once touch that forbidden fruit, then as a human, and above all as a

magician, they would become unable to suppress their covetous thirst for knowledge. There was no more going back. The research on the mysteries of life could not be halted once it began.

Even Glen, who served as a champion for the hatred of all things magic, found himself unable to resist the urge, and fixed his eyes on the open research. Sistina was unable to hide her surprise.

“I see... So when someone becomes too engrossed in this they’ll descend into the realm of heretical magicians...”

“There’s nothing we can do about our thirst for knowledge, we’re human after all, but we can’t allow ourselves to go too far. We can’t allow ourselves to forget what we’re doing, and for what purpose...”

“...Mm, we need to be careful to not lose ourselves in our own desires.”

To calm her nerves, Sistina released a long breath.

“How should I say this...? It’s expected, but they really are doing ‘that research’ here... Well, it should be more or less a given anyway.”

Sistina jokingly commented, hoping to change the heavy mood.

“‘That research’, what do you mean Sisti?”

“Ah—, mhm. It’s, well... research to resurrect and revive the dead. A while back, the Empire started a massive magic project under its banner, if I remember correctly, its name was... Ermm—”

“... [Project: Revive Life]” suddenly came the voice of a third-party.

Sistina and Lumia turned around in surprise. Standing there was the ever-warm and friendly old-man Bacchus.

“I’d never thought that I would hear about this from

students... You've studied well, haven't you? I'm sure an excellent youngster like you will bring light to the future of the Empire."

"No, how could I... It's just a coincidence! Excuse me for my discourtesy!"

Sistina shrunk in a panic.

Although unable to understand why Sistina apologized, Lumia voiced her question.

"Uhm... Bacchus-san. Would you mind explaining what this [Project: Revive Life] is...?"

"Hm? What do you mean by that miss?"

"Mm... In class we learned and discussed that it was impossible to bring the dead back to life..."

"Fufu, you must be talking about the derivation of Marvel's Cosmozone theory. Death cannot be reversed, yes?"

Bacchus continued with a smile.

"Certainly, it is as you say. The structure of life is divided into three essential parts; the [Material Body], which makes up the physical body, [Astral Body], which makes up the mind, and [Aether Body], which makes up the soul... When a living being passes on, the three essentials come apart and each return to the cycle from which they came from. The [Material Body] returns to the cycle of nature, the [Astral Body] returns to the collection of unconscious in the Eighth World... the sea of consciousness, and the [Aether Body] returns to the cycle of reincarnation, the wheel of providence. Thusly—"

After a short pause, Bacchus looked directly into Lumia's eyes and said.

"After life, the [Astral Body] dissolve in the sea of consciousness and the [Aether Body] will reincarnate into its next life. As a result, bringing back the dead is impossible — These are the irreversible circumstances behind death. As of

now, there are also no spells that would allow this barrier to be overcome. Which brings us to our resurrection plan [Project: Revive Life]... The name [Re—”

“[Project: Revive Life], at its core, takes the three essentials of life that Bacchus-san just mentioned and tries to replace them with something else in an attempt to bring the dead back to life.”

Suddenly Glen butted into the conversation as if to take the spotlight.

“With the ‘Gene · Code’ taken from the hereditary information of the person you want to revive as a basis, you can create a substitute body using alchemical means. Then by taking the soul of another and formatting it clean using several methods, you can create an [Alter · Aether] to use as a substitute for the soul. Then you can take the spiritual information from the person you want to revive and convert that into [Astral · Code] to use as a substitute for the spirit. Finally, you can combine the substitutes of the three essentials together, and bring about the revival of the person... That about sums up the technique...”

“Hey sensei! Thanks for the explanation, but Bacchus-san was talking wasn’t he!? It’s rude for you to butt in!”

“Oh, I’m so sorry. The topic seemed interesting so I just...”

Glen flippantly attempted to calm Sistina’s anger.

“Ah—, sorry about butting in, Bacchus-san...”

“No no, I don’t mind in the slightest. On the contrary, your explanation was commendable, as expected of a current instructor of the academy. Not only was your reasoning logical and cogent; it was much faster to allow you to explain in my stead.

The friendly Bacchus-san said with a laugh. Glancing at Glen, who forced an awkward smile, Lumia pondered to herself.

Plan to resurrect the dead, [Project: Revive Life].

Basically, it takes a copy and a copy and a copy, and puts them together to create a copy of a person. If all the components are copies then the revived product will share nothing with the original.

“But... could that still be called resurrection?”

“Certainly, with this method, the person that is revived is not strictly the same as the original. However, to the others around them, a person that was supposed to be lost has returned with a completely identical appearance and the recollections of their persona... That in itself is quite useful is it not? If this is successful, than even if a great hero or talent passed away due to unforeseen events, it would be possible to immediately bring them back with the same abilities and form...”

Lumia got goosebumps at the thought of it. If she were to die... And then appeared a her that wasn't herself that was treated by Sistina and everyone else as 'Lumia'. Then it was as if she was the copy instead...

The more she thought about thought about it, the more twisted and frightening it became.

“I understand your unease. After all, what you are surely feeling right now was a topic of heavy debate from the beginning to end of the project, and was also a great cause of discussion for the priests of the Empire's church. There was even a time where the Holy Elizareth church of the Rezalia kingdom participated in the discussion.”

That was of no surprise. The doctrines of both the new and old sects of the Elizareth church advocated that life was a gift from god; Blessings for when one's life came to an end, and wishes for when they moved on to the next. The contents of this research directly opposed their doctrine. It wasn't hard to imagine that this was a cause for conflict and chaos between those that advocated for research and those of the devout orthodox.

“However, do rest assured. From a results perspective, this

researched ended with decisive failure. This was because as the research proceeded we encountered the functional limitations of the magic language 'rune', which served as an absolute barrier that we found no way to overcome. As a result, the project was, albeit all too soon, fated for abandonment."

"...Functional limitations?"

"Indeed."

"What do you mean by that? Do you mean that the techniques and formulation methods at the time weren't enough?" Lumia asked curiously.

"Lumia, do you remember that Rune language is based off from the timbre of the first soul in this world... 'The sound of origin'?"

Hearing that, Lumia replied to Glen was another question.

"Ah, yes I do. It's because Rune is a similar language to [The Sound of Origin] that the chanting of spells require special enunciation techniques. Although we, at a conscious level are unable to understand the meaning, we are, however, able to clearly derive its meaning at a subconscious level, right? However, even if it's said to be close to [The Sound of Origin], it is first and foremost a creation of the people, so it's fairly incomplete compared to the language of angels and dragons..."

"That's right. You've remembered it well. So, back on topic, the grouping of Rune creates the functions of magic, and the grouping of these functions creates a magical technique... This lead us to the problem. No matter how you use Rune, there's no grouping of functions or methods that would allow us to combine the three essentials of life into one. It's not that the formulation techniques of the time weren't enough, but rather an underlying problem with an incomplete magic language like Rune. Given Rune's potential and specs, it was proved that it was impossible to bring the technique to

competition. That's what he means by the functional limits of the magic language Rune."

Having explained this much in one go, Glen shrugged his shoulders.

"Essentially, regardless of how capable a blacksmith is, given steel, it's impossible for the blacksmith to create a sword that is harder and tougher than steel itself. Thus, that sword cannot easily cut a shield made of mithril."

"Ha-ha-ha-, that is quite the explanation, Glen-sensei."

"On top of that, there is one key problem. Perhaps this problem is greater than the functional limits of Rune."

Ignoring Bacchus' praises, Glen plainly continued.

"One of the three essentials needed to perform resurrection... About the substitute for the soul [Alter · Aether]... Other than taking the extracting the souls of various unrelated parties, then processing and refining them, there is no other known way to create it."

"Eh!? By that... you don't mean..."

"That's right. To revive a single person, many others will certainly die. There is no way that this would be allowed. We humans aren't gods, we have no right to choose who lives or who dies."

"My my, you've certainly taken all of the glory for yourself. Anyway, due to the plethora of issues you have kindly brought up, the project was sealed in the end."

With a beaming smile, Bacchus supplemented Glen's uninvited explanation.

"Apparently, some magic society had stolen some documents related to the project and, using some extraordinarily talented alchemist, somehow brought the project to fruition... Though, I must say that these are fake anecdotes at best."

"I've heard those rumors as well, but those are an urban

legend at best.”

“...Sensei?”

Lumia noticed a graven expression on Glen’s face for a mere moment as he then fell silent.

“...No, It’s nothing.”

Glen turned his head away.

Lumia, hoping to disperse the awkward mood that Glen had created, threw a question at Bacchus, albeit in form only.

“Uhm... Just out of curiosity... in order to make [Project: Revive Life] work... what else is necessary? That is, assuming that the problem of sacrifices is already solved...”

“Oh? Do you wish challenge [Project: Revive Life], which has been branded as absolutely impossible?”

“Ah, no, it’s really just out of curiosity...”

Lumia quickly denied the statement as she waved her hands.

“It’s fine. That said, people like myself are already trapped by our great general knowledge of the magic realm, so it becomes impossible for us to re-evaluate such a problem from scratch. To be frank, I am quite jealous of the point of view of you youngsters.”

“A-, Ahaha... No way...”

Before the bashful Lumia, Bacchus placed a hand to his lips and pondered for a moment.

“Hmm... I suppose... for [Project: Revive Life] which is said to be impossible, there are roughly two ways to make it succeed. The first is original magic.

“...Original magic?”

“Yes. Original magic refers to a person’s unique magic affinity[\[2\]](#)... It is magic that applies the current state of the soul. There have been incidents where original magic has allowed techniques that were impossible in theory to

succeed. If there were someone who bore a magical affinity that was peculiar to [Project: Revive Life]... Then I believe that they would bring success.

“But the chances of such a person appearing are astronomically low is it not?”

Sistina reflexively butted in.

“Hahaha, perhaps so. As for the other possibility... is through the use of a language that is closer to [The Sound of Origin] than Rune. For example, the language of dragons or angels. Those languages are overwhelming closer to [The Sound of Origin] than the language we use, thus I believe that the chances of success are very high if that were the case.”

“But, people aren’t able to use the language of dragons or angels as a magic language...”

“Indeed. However, if another language appears that can be used as a magic language beyond Rune then... Well, perhaps that is too much of a tangent in and of itself.”

Bacchus followed with a light cackle that seemed to bear some sentiment.

“E-, Excuse me for asking such a pointless question...”

“It’s fine. Talking to youngsters like you makes me feel young again. Of course, that is all the more so with beautiful ladies such as yourselves.”

“N-, Not really...”

“Ahaha, and you have quite the tongue for flattery, Bacchus-san.”

Lumia and Sistina bashfully replied.

“Now then, I suppose it’s about time we keep moving. There are still many places I would like you all to visit...”

A countless number of mysteries were unveiled one after

another; there appeared to be no end to surprises. For the students, who were all aspired to work in the some realm of magic in the future, this was certainly a meaningful time.

Time flew by quickly. By the time the tour ended, it was already nearing sunset.

The class reluctantly returned home. The students, in their undying excitement, seemed to forget their fatigue as they traversed the ill path from which they came, passionately discussing magic all along the way. When they arrived at their lodgings in the northeastern coastal area, the skies were already dark.

It was now free time. Those who still had strength went to town for food and to browse the roadside stalls. Those who didn't retired for the night. The students formed their own groups and went about their own things.

Riel stayed away from the groups, but with no real purpose, she idly stood outside the building. Her figure seemed even smaller than usual.

Unable to bear the sight, Lumia called out to her.

"Hey Riel, we're going to town to get some food. Would you like to come with..."

"...Don't want to."

However, Riel bluntly refused and turned around to leave.

"Riel..."

Lumia looked at Riel's back with sadness.

Sistina glared at the same back with irritation.

Then, someone quickly moved to intercept Riel.

"Oi, that's enough Riel."

It was Glen.

Even he couldn't turn a blind eye to this. Not getting along was one thing, but at this rate, Riel's attitude would interfere

with her primary duty as a bodyguard. Mentally preparing himself for a scolding if necessary, Glen pulled on Riel's shoulder.

"How long are you planning on sulk—"

"Shut up!"

However, Riel flung Glen's arm aside and quickly ran away. Pushing away everyone in her way, she dashed into an alleyway and soon disappeared from sight.

"...Tch, that idiot..."

Now then, what do I do now? Glen thought of how to deal with Riel.

"Go after her, sensei." Lumia called out to Glen.

"We'll be fine. Riel's more important right now. If we go after her, it'll probably have the opposite effect... For now, I think it's best that you be with her."

"... Sorry about this."

Glen couldn't allow himself to leave Riel alone when she was in such an unstable state either.

"I'll go have a word with her."

Saying that, Glen dashed after Riel.

"Hah—Hah—Hah—"

The scenery flew past her as quickly as it came.

Riel, in a burst of impulse and emotions, continued to run, with no end-goal in mind.

Why? Why does my head hurt? Why is it so hard to breathe? Why does my chest sting? Why do my eyes burn?

Am I sick?

Questions for which she could not find the answers to stormed within her and showed no signs of receding.

Lumia looked sad.

Sistina looked angry.

When they look at me like that... Why does my chest feel heavy? Why do my eyes feel hot? Why does it feel so unpleasant?

Did I make some mistake?

...That doesn't matter... It's because of them that Glen left my side.

I can't be with people who robbed me of Glen.

They're the bad ones. It's their fault.

That's why I'm sure I hate them.

That's why I'm sure that all these good feelings I've had with them are lies.

That's why I'm sure that this pain in my chest is just my imagination. It must be.

...But...

"Why... Why does it hurt so much...?"

Repeating these thoughts many, many times over, Riel continued to run. She ran with all her heart.

As if she were running away. As if she were trying to break through the dead ends of her thoughts.

She ran, and ran, and ran, with all her might.

...And then—

Riel continued to run further north, having already left the northeastern sightseeing district.

Soon after, she arrived at the former developmental landscape.

The area had previously been planned for future development into a new sightseeing district, but due to a multitude of complications, the development had been abandoned. At present, it was a ghost town with only Riel present.

There was not a single lamp to illuminate the darkness of the

night.

Riel wandered through the dead town with no goal in mind.

Finally, her loitering brought her to what was formerly a harbor.

The waves splashed against the wharf, becoming a spray of droplets before returning to the sea.

The cold sea breeze swept mercilessly against Riel's skin.

She looked down into the pitch black abyss of the sea. It wouldn't seem strange if a monster appeared from its depths. The domain was completely hidden by the darkness, evoking a primal fear.

Why?

When I had come to see the sea with Lumia and Sistina yesterday, it had been so pretty.

But now... my knees won't stop shaking at the sight of the sea. It's scary, like a monster.

Will I never be able to such a beautiful moonlit sea again?

As Riel's mind wandered upon that thought—

“...u”

For some reason—

“...sniff...uu...”

Tears—

“Why... Why...?”

Spilled from the edges of her eyes, and she began to weep.

She did not cry out, but the tears would not cease, flowing uncontrollably down her cheeks.

Why is this happening? What is this pressing feeling against my chest?

I've becoming strange.

Ever since this mission. Ever since I went to the academy and met those two, I've become strange. I've become out of place. Even though I've never felt

this way before—

Riel softly cried by herself.

...Then.

It came all too suddenly.

“...You crying, Riel?”

A voice came from before. It was a voice that she had heard somewhere before.

I didn't even notice them approach until they called out to me? ...Just what is wrong with me right now?

“—Who is it!?”

Riel quickly turned around. At the same time, she bent down and pressed her hands on the floor, synthesizing a greatsword on the spot—

In an instant, the tip of the blade quickly whirled around with a roar and found itself pointing towards the young white-robed man.

The man's hair was a pale blue rare seen in the empire.

...Eh?

I think... I've seen this person before...

“...W-, Who are you!? What are you!?”

But I can't remember.

Riel thought hard and sifted through her memories, but it was as though her mindscape was blurred by an opaque white fog. She could not grasp the man's identity.

Feeling an unknown, yet creeping sense of impatience, Riel pressed the tip of the trembling blade towards and shouted for him to name himself.

“That's terribly rude. How could you not know who I am...? Well, I suppose it's been quite a while, so it's understandable.”

Answer me! You... Who are you!? Why do you know who I am!?"

"...It's okay."

In contrast to Riel, who seemed like she could burst into a frenzy at any moment, the man showed warm and serene smile. It was as though he believed in Riel would not hurt him... from the bottom of his heart.

"You should know who I am. Take a moment to think..."

"....."

Riel gazed deeply at the man's face.

His face. His gestures. His expressions. I've definitely seen them before.

But when? Where?

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□.

...Then.

The answer suddenly appeared from the depths of her heart, like bubbles bursting above the surface of water.

"...Brother? Is that you... Brother?"

In disbelief of even her own murmurs, Riel gazed at the man. The man showed a wide smile...

"Of course, Riel. It's been a while hasn't it...? I've always wanted to meet you."

And said such.

"...Tch."

In the depths of the forest, submerged in the darkness of this slightly foggy night, was a man wearing all black, with his arms crossed and his back leaned against a tree – Albert. Although unintentional, he made his annoyance clear through

the loud click of his tongue.

Albert was currently west of the sightseeing district, inside the forest that belonged to the restricted area.

He simultaneously used multiple farsight spells to monitor Lumia's group from his current position^[3].

He had also been keeping an eye on Riel, who had separated herself on the group, but...

"...So they've come."

Doesn't seem like the Wisdom of the Heavens Research Society will let this chance slip by.

Yet, to think that they've drawn plans this time around as well. The reaches of their influence never fails to scare me.

—It'll take a while before Glen catches up to Riel.

—It's better for me to make a move.

Coming to that decision, Albert turned towards the sightseeing district, but—

"...Hmpf. You're quite quick on the move. No, perhaps I was too naïve."

Albert immediately came to a halt and cautiously observed his surroundings.

At some point in time, a rather conspicuous people-warding field had been placed in the area. It seemed like a sound-blocking barrier had been tagged on as well. No one else would notice what happened within the bounds of the field.

There's no reason for anyone unrelated to wander into such a remote area at this time of day. The person behind this is rather prudent.

—Then.

"Fufu... Are you alone tonight? Albert-sama..."

A dangerously heated, yet bewitching female voice rung through the area.

"Then how about you be my partner tonight? My body feels

so hot today that it feels as though it burning... If you would like to join me..."

A female figure appeared from the shade of a tree behind Albert.

"I can offer you a burning, passionate summer night's dream. A moment unvirtuous, decadent, yet filled with ecstasy..."

"Unfortunately—"

Albert turned in a polished, efficient motion, pointing his left hand forwards.

Utilizing delayed-activation, he instantaneously fired a spell which he had pre-chanted long beforehand, [Lightning · Pierce], towards the female figure. The shining beam of light pierced through the darkness.

The woman lightly jumped out of the way, and elegantly landed on the branch of a large tree.

"I have no interest in easy women like yourself. Disappear."

"Oh my, that's rather cold of you... Not to mention, quite rude. For your knowledge, you should treat women as gently as silk."

"I never would have thought that you would personally involve yourself in this matter, one wing of the Wisdom of the Heavens' Research Society's Adeptus Order, heretical magician Elenora Charlotte."

"My oh my? Even my rank has been exposed? The army is certainly not just for show I suppose."



Albert's hawk-like eyes fixed themselves on the Elenora, who showed a ghastly smile as if to dye the night a shade of red.

"Your presence here means that your group has another deplorable plan involving the princess, does it not? Let's end it here. I will have you take your leave."

"My my, would it hurt to be more patient? Selfish men who have no respect for a woman's advances will find themselves on the receiving end of their distaste. There's truly no need to hurry..."

Elenora chanted a spell under a breath and then snapped her fingers with a loud click.

Suddenly, several figures burst and pulled themselves out of the ground, surrounding Albert.

The air in the area was filled with the scent of rotting flesh and dead.

Decayed skin, exposed bones; it only took a glance to affirm that these figures were human corpses.

Furthermore, all these figures were female. Albert couldn't understand why, but understood that Elenora was the mastermind who had summoned them.

The corpses seemed to express the twisted madness within Elenora.

"As you can see, we are all dressed up and ready to serve to your hearts content..."

"...Necromancer, huh."

Albert scornful gaze pierced through Elenora.

"Fine, heretic. I shall keep you company... Fair warning, my taste in women is quite picky."

"Fufu, then I shall do my utmost to provide service that is to your pleasure— Let us begin."

Then, Elenora quickly chanted yet another spell.

Responding to Elenora's spell, the corpses charged towards Albert in unison.

"Hmpf, <Bellow oh flame lion>—" [\[4\]](#)

In response, Albert swiftly chanted a one stage spell.

Flames flared from Albert's left arm...

In the next moment, a giant tower of flame burst above the trees of the dark forest.

"No way... Brother... But... How...?"

With surprise and shock... Riel's gaze latched onto the man in front of her.

The person she had wanted to protect, but hadn't been able to... The goal she had lost and sought a replacement for... was now before her very own eyes.

"You... Brother... but... you died... you were killed by *that person*..."

"...*That person*? Who do you mean by *that person*?"

"...T-, That's..."

Riel fell silent. *Who was 'that person'?*

□□□□.

I can't remember. That memory is just a shade of white.

"Well, it doesn't matter anymore who killed me. What most important to you is that me, your brother, has once again appeared before you... right? Am I wrong?"

That's right. It doesn't matter if I don't remember who 'that person' was.

"Brother... Why are you still alive? I remember that you..."

"You're right. My plan for us to leave the organization had been leaked. On that day, I had been attacked by them. Perhaps you may not have noticed in the heat of the

moment, but I was actually still breathing.”

Yes. The day that my brother died—

That day— *had* *my brother, and I* .

.

“Guu...”

My head hurts. My memories feel empty. It’s strange.

Glen always told me to not think too much about the past, but even if I did, my head would begin to hurt, so I couldn’t think about it even if I wanted to... It’s all so strange. It all happened only two years ago... How could I completely forget it all?

“A-, Are you okay Riel? What happened back then must’ve been very shocking for you... If it’s uncomfortable to think back on it, it’s okay not to.”

“M...mm...”

Under her brother’s concern, Riel tried to rid her mind of these thoughts.

No, I have to remember... Such an alarm rung in the depths of her heart, but due to the headache, she decided to ignore it.

Not to mention, to Riel, her brother’s word was more important than anything else.

“S-, So brother... what are you doing here...?”

“Isn’t that obvious? I came here to meet you of course, Riel.” Her brother said with a warm smile.

“Two years ago, you miraculously found your freedom with the Imperial Court Magicians. However, I failed... Even know, I’m nothing but a slave of the organization.”

“No... way...”

Hearing her brother’s words, Riel felt the crushing weight of guilt striking against her chest.

If what brother says is true... Then what have I, who promised to protect him, been doing all this time?

“B-, Brother... I’m... s... sorry... I... didn’t know...”

“You don’t need to apologize. This wasn’t your fault. Though, if you think you owe me, then...”

The man continued, as if pleading.

“...Help me out, Riel.”

Riel’s eyes widened.

“...Help you?”

“You should know right? What happens to traitors of that organization... I can’t take it any longer... The reason they let me live all this time is because I still have some value to them...”

“B-, But... how should I help you... What can I do?” Riel, unable to hide her anxiety, timidly asked.

“Lumia Tinsel.”

“!”

Hearing her brother’s answer, Riel’s complexion turned pale.

“As of now, the organization is attempting to commence a certain plan. For it, they require the girl named Lumia Tinsel... That, and the magic instructor protecting her, Glen, is too much of an obstacle. He must be eliminated first.”

Even Riel could understand what her brother meant.

“Cooperate with me, Riel. Since then, I’ve abided by every order for two whole years... and now they have given me a chance. As long as I bring them Lumia and see the plan through to completion... they will give me my freedom.”

“Ahh... a... a....”

In essence, he was asking her to betray Glen and Lumia.

If she accepted her brother’s offer... Then there would likely be no going back.

...*Why*.

Glen's shock, Lumia's sadness, Sistina's anger. Their expressions appeared in her mind.

Why do I feel so afraid?

For my brother, I should be willing to do anything. That's how I lived in the past. What am I afraid of now?

Glen was just a replacement because he was a little similar to brother, Lumia was just someone I had to accompany for my mission, Sistina was nothing more than an extra person to deal with.

If so, then why?

Why do I feel so afraid of betraying them?

Did I not promise to live for my brother's sake?

Wasn't nothing else supposed to matter?

"U...ah... ah... I... I'm..."

Riel buried her head in her arms and slowly retreated away from her brother.

Her feet felt as though they had crumpled and collapse.

Looking into her brother's eyes, she felt her sense of self disappear...

Then.

Seeing Riel's hesitation, her brother murmured with great sadness.

"Riel... Didn't you say that you were going to protect me? Are you planning to ignore me and leave me behind again...?"

"Ah..."

Hearing that—

Riel felt something in her heart shatter and break.

"...I-, I will..."

As words of her decision were about to leave her mouth—

"Riel! Get away from him!"

Suddenly, a sharp desperate shout rung forth. A figure dashed in between Riel and her brother like a gale.

The figure, with a robe with hanging from his back, confronted her brother.

“...-!? Glen Ryders!?”

A mix of surprise and fright appeared on the brother’s expression. Seeing this Riel gazed at the intruder.

“Oh? So you know who I am... Are you from the Wisdom of the Heavens Research Society?”

Hearing his name spoken, Glen raised an eyebrow. With a daunting, low voice, he questioned the man who had approached Riel.

“N-, No... I’m...”

“Don’t make up excuses. In the first place, you’re wearing the ceremonial clothes of that idiot organization’s Portals Order. I’d never mistake such a shitty uniform. Not to mention...”

Glen glared at the man expression, as if seeing right through him.

“If you are part of that organization then you should have a tattoo of a snake coiling around a dagger. If I have to, I’ll use force to confirm whether it’s there. If it’s not I’ll prostrate myself and apologize.”

“U...”

The man’s face turned pale at Glen’s declaration. He was obviously losing his bearings.

The man’s incompotence only served to confirm Glen’s suspicions.

“Geez, you guys are way too passionate about your work. You’re still going about your stuff even at a time like this? It won’t hurt to skip out once in a while won’t it? This time around though, you were too careless.

Glen already had the arcana of [The Fool] in his hand.

“I don’t know what you were trying to sell Riel on, but you failed when you gave me enough time to rush here, heretic.”

Glen had already activated his original magic [The Fool’s World], a magician-slaying spell that sealed all activation of magic within a fixed area around Glen.

Despite only being able to shorten his chants to three stages at best and possessing the magic capacity of a third-rate magician, it was this magic that allowed him to be one of the aces of the Imperial Court Magicians. Before [The Fool], all magicians would become nothing more than powerless children.

Judging from the man’s reaction, he wasn’t a combat-type magician that generally dealt with more violent matters... but negligence was forbidden.

“I don’t know what tricks you have up your sleeve, but it’s all pointless now. Everything you have will be nullified. The Portals Order is only the base level of the organization, so someone like you probably won’t have any useful information, though, it won’t hurt to be careful. Riel, let’s catch that guy.”

Glen placed the arcana of [The Fool] back in his pocket, and closed the distance between himself and the man.

At this moment, Glen had no doubts about his tremendous advantage in this fight.

Currently, the activation of all magic was sealed. On top of that, it was a two versus one.

Amongst the Imperial Court Magicians, he and Riel were the most outstanding at close range combat. Not to mention, Riel had already synthesized her sword. The opponent didn’t possess any weapons, nor was there any trace of any magic tools that had already been activated.

That’s why—

“...Eh?”

He was unable to comprehend the sudden impact that assaulted him from behind, and the burning sensation that oozed from his body in the following moment.

“Geh...”

Glen choked as the taste of steel flooded his throat.

“... Ri... el?”

Glen turned his head around with shock towards Riel.

This, has gotta be a joke.

“...”

Riel, whose eyes were hollow and lusterless, had thrust the greatsword in her hands deeply through Glen’s back. The naked blade cleanly pierced through Glen’s right chest, and forming a dark-red protrusion on the other side of considerable length.

“Guh...!? ...Gah... Wh... W-, Wh...y...!? ”

Fresh blood poured from his mouth. It was already a pointless question to ask.

“...Y... You... can’t, be... !? That... ca... n’t... be... ?”

He couldn’t believe it. Such thoughts and feelings poured out of him.

“...That you for everything.”

Riel’s bloodied face was blank and hollow as she gave her thanks.

“But, I’ve... decided to live for the sake of my brother here.”



“...Huh? ...Brother?”

It was then—

Glen eyes widened, as if seeing something he never thought was possible.

“...R-, Riel... you... what are you saying...-!?”

“...Goodbye.”

Riel casually swung the greatsword that had skewered Glen.

Glen’s body spun in an arc, blood spraying from his body with every motion.

“—!?”

The force flung Glen off the sword, his body flying through the air in a parabola.

Sprays of red decorated the sky like the petals of a fallen flower...

Then, with a column of water, the body fell into the darkness of the sea.

Glen’s body was devoured by the raging tides, never to appear again.

“.....”

With eyes like orbs of glass, she stared at Glen as he sunk into the sea.

She didn’t say anything, nor did her eyes reflect any emotions.

There was only the sound of the cold tidal winds blowing through Riel’s emptied heart.

“...Riel.”

Riel’s brother expressed his thanks towards Riel, who stood still and silent.

“Thanks... for protecting me. It must’ve been hard, Riel...”

“...No. I... just... did it for you...” Riel said with a spectre-like voice.

“...That’s why... this is nothing... it’s nothing...”

Yes, it’s nothing. It’s just returned to how it was before.

For my brother, to protect my brother, I kill, I wear away at my life. It returned to how it was before.

That’s why this crushing feeling against my chest must be a lie. An illusion.

Lumia and Sistina... The feeling that they’ve now gone far, far away; this sense of loss, must also be a lie, an illusion.

That’s why, the tears that fill my eyes and roll down my cheeks must be a figment of my imagination.

Notes

[1] Platinum Magic is 白金術, literally translated it means white-gold art. White magic is 白魔術, which literally is white-magic art, and alchemy is 鍊金術, which literally is refine-gold art. Combining the names of white magic and alchemy we get white-gold art, which is equivalent to platinum magic.

[2] Written as magic affinity, read as 'personality'

[3] Simultaneously cast is read as 'Multi-Task'

[4] Albert's one stage chant for [Blaze Burst] appears to be different from the one attempted by the terrorist in Volume 1, Chapter 5, during the duel with Glen. His [Blaze Burst] started with <Flame Lion—>

Interlude I: When the Ephemeral Dream Ends

“Hah...”

Lumia was alone in her room. Sitting on the sofa, she released a long sigh.

The room, located in the main building of the inn, was shared by Lumia, Sistina, and Riel.

However, not only had Riel run away, Sistina was also not present.

Sistina had said that she would visit the sightseeing district and buy a simple takeout meal for their dinner, so she should return soon.

In truth, Lumia had wanted to join the large group of classmates to get dinner, and they had invited her too. However, knowing that Riel could return at any moment, she had decided to stay.

As Lumia had refused, Sistina had defaulted to joining her. Sistina’s good nature meant that she couldn’t leave Lumia behind and have fun on her own.

“...I can’t help but feel a little sorry...”

Although Sistina probably wouldn’t mind too much, it weighed heavily on Lumia’s mind.

“Riel...”

She began to think about the girl whose personality changed drastically today.

What had put her in such a bad mood? Perhaps her attitude until now had all been an act? Maybe her rejection of others was her true personality?

To begin with, the worlds in which the two each lived in were far too different.

There was probably too much that Lumia could not understand.

“But...”

She thought back on the fun times where she, Sistina, Lumia, and the rest of the class were together.

Beside the beautiful night time sea, Riel had once claimed that she did not dislike being friends.

I want to believe... I want to believe that those words were not lies.

There must be some reason that she was unable to bear this kind of life, that she decided to reject her surroundings. There must.

That's why, it'll be fine. I'll meet Riel, talk to her, set things right, and apologize to one another... Then it'll all be over.

Those noisy but fun times will return -- That was what Lumia believed.

“First, I'll have to be able to meet her.”

But, there's no need to worry about that.

Because Glen went to find her.

If it's Glen, then I'm sure he'll find Riel and bring her back.

What I need to think about is what to say when I meet Riel again.

“Mhm...”

Lumia tried to piece together her words.

“I don't know why Riel got angry, but saying ‘I'm sorry’ all of a sudden would be strange...”

Just doing that wouldn't make her forgive me. That would just be smoothing over the problem to keep up appearances. I don't want to do that.

Facing a problem more complex than imagined, Lumia lost herself in thought... it was then that—

BAM!

A loud noise suddenly burst from the room's balcony. Lumia's shoulders jumped in surprise at the shrill noise.

In the next moment, she heard someone enter the room.

"...Eh!?"

Lumia quickly turned towards the source of the noise.

The door leading to the balcony had been kicked apart from the outside. The remains were scattered across the floor of the room.

Next to the swaying remains of the hinges of the door—
Was a specter-like girl.

"...Eh? ...Riel?"

The figure and appearance was undoubtedly that of Riel, but Lumia, for a brief moment, was unable to recognize her.

"....."

Something about her right now is off-putting. She seemed like a doll the first time I met her, but it doesn't compare to how she is now. Her body looks normal, but I can't shake this ominous feeling. It's like she's a puppet whose limbs have been broken and twisted.

"—!?"

The light of the room's lamps revealed Riel's appearance, which Lumia had confirmed with some delay. It was then Lumia's mind went blank.

Blood. Riel's face and hands were soaked in fresh blood.

Whose blood was it? — Who had gone searching for Riel, and who did she then meet? — Lumia didn't want to think about it.

In Riel's small hands was a sword.

The cross claymore dripped with fresh blood. The steel gleamed with sinister light.

Who had been sacrificed to the blade? – The mere thought

made Lumia tremble.

“...Riel, what did you do...?”

However, Lumia shoved the thought to the back of her mind. Suppressing the growing, ominous feeling in her chest, she managed to keep herself together and ask the question. Her steadfastness was worthy of praise.

Though—

All her steadfastness was for naught.

“... Sorry.”

Riel uttered as she readied her sword.

I don't know her reason, but I have to run now.

Following her instinct, Lumia retreated backwards.

Lumia's opponent, however, was too much for her.

Accompanied by the sound of parting winds, Riel swiftly closed to distance between them.

It had only taken one step and one instant.

... Lumia wasn't able to react in time. There was no way she could have.

“Ah...”

By the time she realized it, Riel was already swinging the greatsword.

S-, Sensei...

In the next instant, the blade fell like lightning.

Help...

The crescent swing was burned into Lumia eyes—

Lumia vision then went to black.

A crash echoed through the inn—

The shockwave from the swing pushed a vase from its resting

place... from where it then fell and broke.

あとかぎ。

ご購入ありがとうございました!!

リィエルを
いちごタルトで
餌付けしたい。



しお 311
2015.3

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